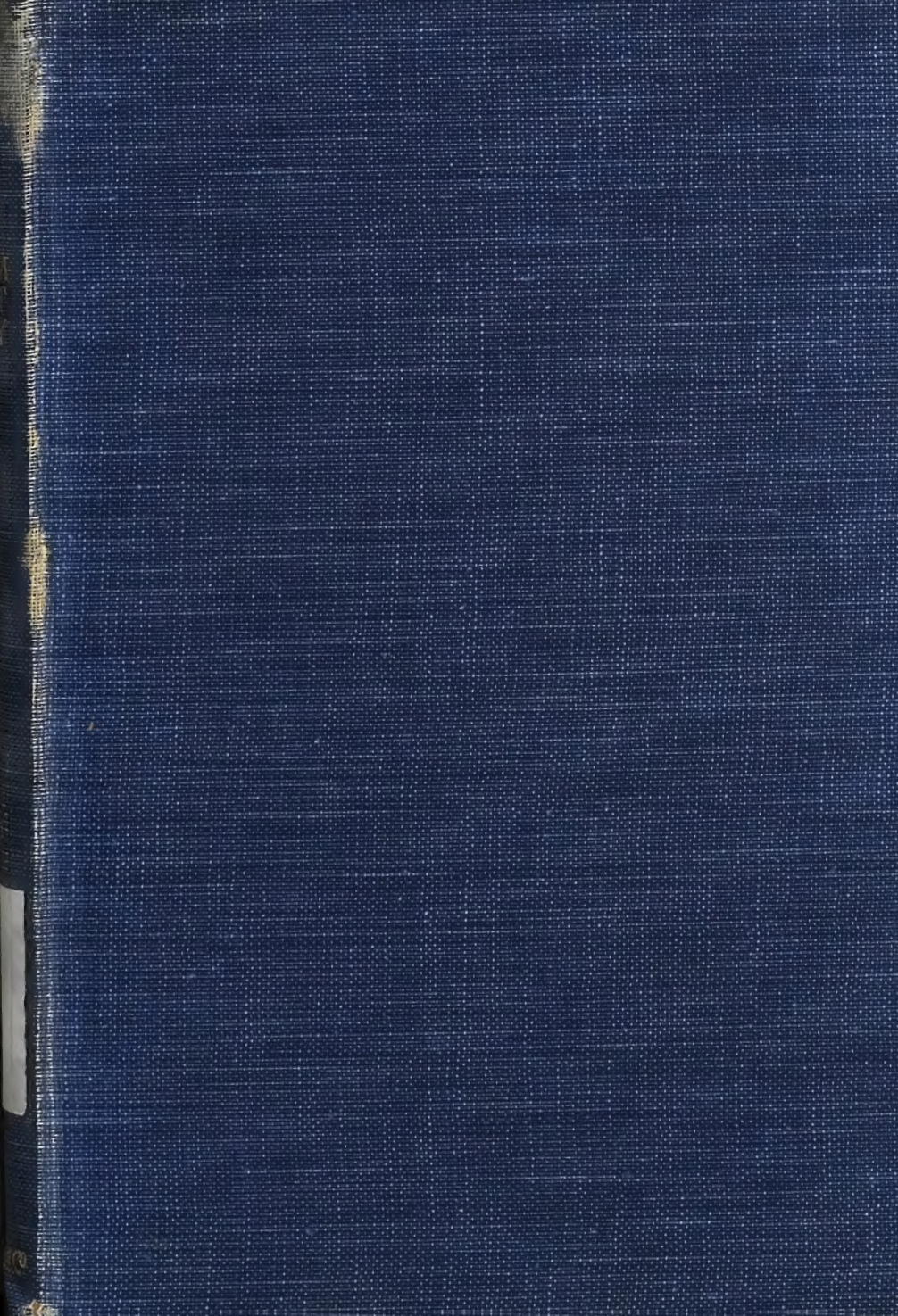
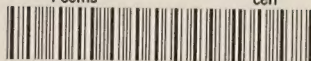




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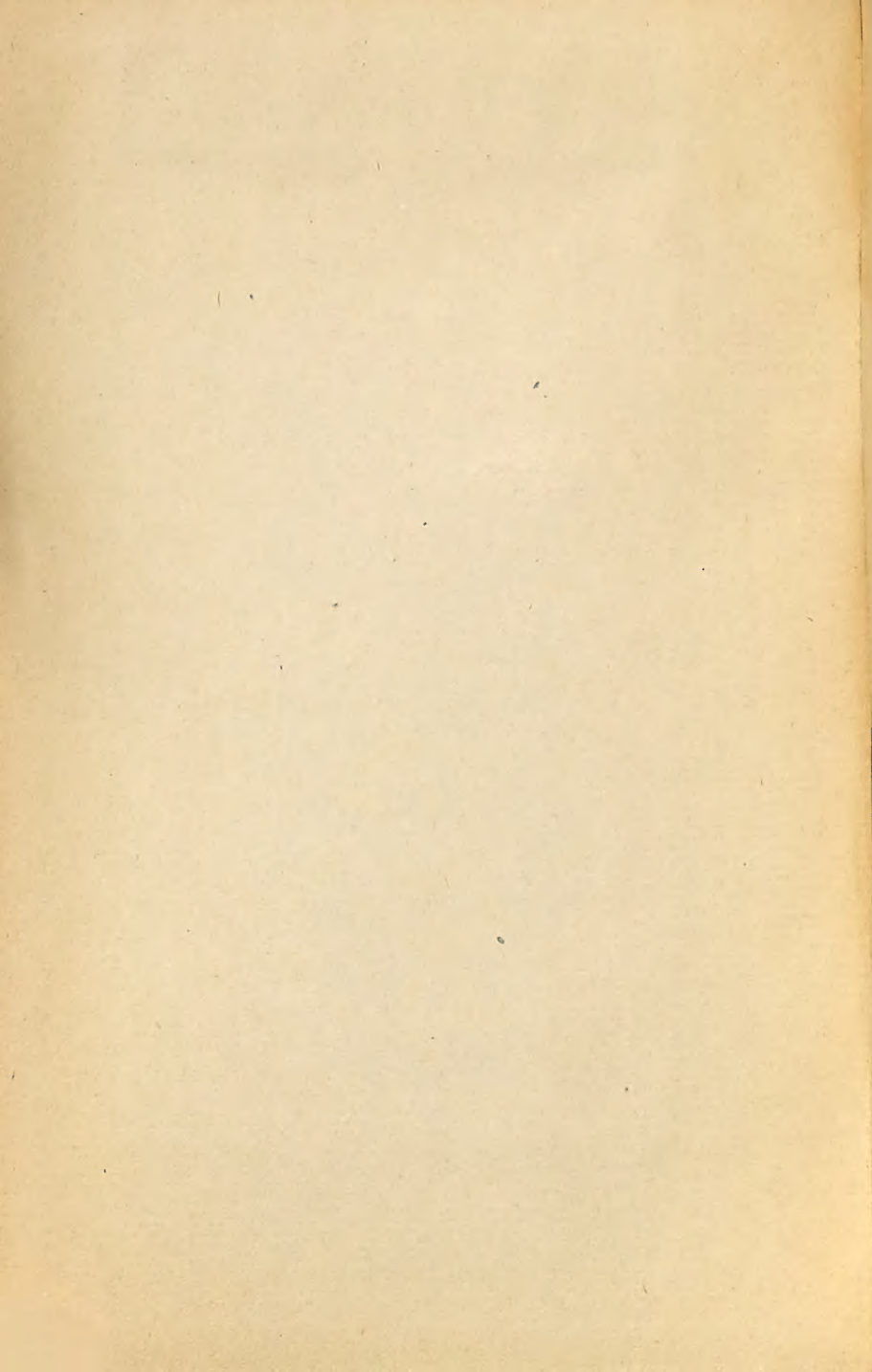
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THE WORKS OF
WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

POEMS



MACMILLAN AND CO., Limited
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TORONTO

POEMS

BY

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

*'The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die.'*

SHAKESPEARE

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1921

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VU.ENG.

TO MY WIFE

*Take, dear, my little sheaf of songs,
For, old or new,
All that is good in them belongs
Only to you ;*

*And, singing as when all was young,
They will recall
Those others, lived but left unsung—
The best of all.*

W. E. H.

APRIL 1888.

SEPTEMBER 1897.

PGE/Am 8-12-82

*Ask me not how they came,
These songs of love and death,
These dreams of a futile stage,
These thumb-nails seen in the street :
Ask me not how nor why,
But take them for your own,
Dear Wife of twenty years,
Knowing—O, who so well?—
You it was made the man
That made these songs of love,
Death, and the trivial rest :
So that, your love elsewhere,
These songs, or bad or good—
How should they ever have been ?*

WORTHING, July 31, 1901.

NOTE

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IN HOSPITAL

*On ne saurait dire à quel point un homme, seul dans son
lit et malade, devient personnel. —*

BALZAC.

I

ENTER PATIENT

THE morning mists still haunt the stony street ;
 The northern summer air is shrill and cold ;
 And lo, the Hospital, gray, quiet, old,
 Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers
 meet.

Thro' the loud spaciousness and draughty gloom
 A small, strange child—so agèd yet so young !—
 Her little arm besplinted and beslung,
 Precedes me gravely to the waiting-room.
 I limp behind, my confidence all gone.
 The gray-haired soldier-porter waves me on,
 And on I crawl, and still my spirits fail :
 A tragic meanness seems so to environ
 These corridors and stairs of stone and iron,
 Cold, naked, clean—half-workhouse and half-jail.

II

WAITING

A SQUARE, squat room (a cellar on promotion),
 Drab to the soul, drab to the very daylight ;
 Plasters astray in unnatural-looking tinware ;
 Scissors and lint and apothecary's jars.

IN HOSPITAL

Here, on a bench a skeleton would writhe from,
Angry and sore, I wait to be admitted :
Wait till my heart is lead upon my stomach,
While at their ease two dressers do their chores.

One has a probe—it feels to me a crowbar.
A small boy sniffs and shudders after bluestone.
A poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers.
Life is (I think) a blunder and a shame.

III

INTERIOR

THE gaunt brown walls
Look infinite in their decent meanness.
There is nothing of home in the noisy kettle,
The fulsome fire.

The atmosphere
Suggests the trail of a ghostly druggist.
Dressings and lint on the long, lean table—
Whom are they for ?

The patients yawn,
Or lie as in training for shroud and coffin.
A nurse in the corridor scolds and wrangles.
It 's grim and strange.

Far footfalls clank.
The bad burn waits with his head unbandaged.
My neighbour chokes in the clutch of chloral . . .
O, a gruesome world !

BEFORE

IV

BEFORE

BEHOLD me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
The gods are good to me : I have no wife,
No innocent child, to think of as I near
The fateful minute ; nothing all-too dear
Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.
Yet am I tremulous and a trifle sick,
And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little :
My hopes are strong, my will is something
 weak.
Here comes the basket ? Thank you. I am
 ready.
But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle :
You carry Cæsar and his fortunes—steady !

V

OPERATION

You are carried in a basket,
 Like a carcase from the shambles,
 To the theatre, a cockpit
 Where they stretch you on a table.

IN HOSPITAL

Then they bid you close your eyelids,
And they mask you with a napkin,
And the anæsthetic reaches
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder
In a rushing, swaying rapture,
While the voices at your elbow
Fade—receding—fainter—farther.

Lights about you shower and tumble,
And your blood seems crystallising—
Edged and vibrant, yet within you
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Then the lights grow fast and furious,
And you hear a noise of waters,
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,
In an agony of effort,

Till a sudden lull accepts you,
And you sound an utter darkness . . .
And awaken . . . with a struggle . . .
On a hushed, attentive audience.

VI

AFTER

LIKE as a flamelet blanketed in smoke,
So through the anæsthetic shows my life ;
So flashes and so fades my thought, at strife
With the strong stupor that I heave and choke

VIGIL

And sicken at, it is so foully sweet.
Faces look strange from space—and disappear.
Far voices, sudden loud, offend my ear—
And hush as sudden. Then my senses fleet ;
All were a blank, save for this dull, new pain
That grinds my leg and foot ; and brokenly
Time and the place glimpse on to me again ;
And, unsurprised, out of uncertainty,
I awake—relapsing—somewhat faint and fain,
To an immense, complacent dreamery.

VII

VIGIL

LIVED on one's back,
In the long hours of repose,
Life is a practical nightmare—
Hideous asleep or awake.

Shoulders and loins
Ache - - - !
Ache, and the mattress,
Run into boulders and hummocks,
Glow like a kiln, while the bed-clothes—
Tumbling, importunate, daft—
Ramble and roll, and the gas,
Screwed to its lowermost,
An inevitable atom of light,
Haunts, and a stertorous sleeper
Snores me to hate and despair.

IN HOSPITAL

All the old time
Surges malignant before me ;
Old voices, old kisses, old songs
Blossom derisive about me ;
While the new days
Pass me in endless procession :
A pageant of shadows
Silently, leeringly wending
On . . . and still on . . . still on !

Far in the stillness a cat
Languishes loudly. A cinder
Falls, and the shadows
Lurch to the leap of the flame. The next
man to me
Turns with a moan ; and the snorer,
The drug like a rope at his throat,
Gasps, gurgles, snorts himself free, as the
night-nurse,
Noiseless and strange,
Her bull's eye half-lanterned in apron
(Whispering me, ' Are ye no' sleepin' yet ? '),
Passes, list-slippered and peering,
Round . . . and is gone.

Sleep comes at last—
Sleep full of dreams and misgivings—
Broken with brutal and sordid
Voices and sounds that impose on me,
Ere I can wake to it,
The unnatural, intolerable day.

STAFF-NURSE : OLD STYLE

VIII

STAFF-NURSE : OLD STYLE

THE greater masters of the commonplace,
REMBRANDT and good SIR WALTER—only these
Could paint her all to you : experienced ease
And antique liveliness and ponderous grace ;
The sweet old roses of her sunken face ;
The depth and malice of her sly, gray eyes ;
The broad Scots tongue that flatters, scolds,
 defies ;
The thick Scots wit that fells you like a mace.
These thirty years has she been nursing here,
Some of them under SYME, her hero still.
Much is she worth, and even more is made of her.
Patients and students hold her very dear.
The doctors love her, tease her, use her skill.
They say ' The Chief ' himself is half-afraid of her.

IX

LADY-PROBATIONER

SOME three, or five, or seven, and thirty years ;
A Roman nose ; a dimpling double-chin ;
Dark eyes and shy that, ignorant of sin,
Are yet acquainted, it would seem, with tears ;
A comely shape ; a slim, high-coloured hand,
Graced, rather oddly, with a signet ring ;
A bashful air, becoming everything ;
A well-bred silence always at command.

IN HOSPITAL

Her plain print gown, prim cap, and bright steel
chain

Look out of place on her, and I remain
Absorbed in her, as in a pleasant mystery.

Quick, skilful, quiet, soft in speech and touch . . .

'Do you like nursing?' 'Yes, Sir, very
much.'

Somehow, I rather think she has a history.

x

STAFF-NURSE : NEW STYLE

BLUE-EYED and bright of face but waning fast
Into the sere of virginal decay,

I view her as she enters, day by day,

As a sweet sunset almost overpast.

Kindly and calm, patrician to the last,

Superbly falls her gown of sober gray,

And on her chignon's elegant array

The plainest cap is somehow touched with caste.

She talks BEETHOVEN ; frowns disapprobation

At BALZAC's name, sighs it at 'poor GEORGE
SAND's' ;

Knows that she has exceeding pretty hands ;

Speaks Latin with a right accentuation ;

And gives at need (as one who understands)

Draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation.

CLINICAL

XI

CLINICAL

HIST ? . . .

Through the corridor's echoes

Louder and nearer

Comes a great shuffling of feet.

Quick, every one of you,

Straight your quilts, and be decent !

Here 's the Professor.

In he comes first

With the bright look we know,

From the broad, white brows the kind eyes

Soothing yet nerving you. Here at his elbow,

White-capped, white-aproned, the Nurse,

Towel on arm and her inkstand

Fretful with quills.

Here in the ruck, anyhow,

Surging along,

Louts, duffers, exquisites, students, and prigs—

Whiskers and foreheads, scarf-pins and spec-
tacles—

Hustles the Class ! And they ring themselves

Round the first bed, where the Chief

(His dressers and clerks at attention),

Bends in inspection already.

So shows the ring

Seen from behind round a conjurer

Doing his pitch in the street.

IN HOSPITAL

High shoulders, low shoulders, broad shoulders,
 narrow ones,
Round, square, and angular, serry and shove ;
While from within a voice,
Gravely and weightily fluent,
Sounds ; and then ceases ; and suddenly
(Look at the stress of the shoulders !)
Out of a quiver of silence,
Over the hiss of the spray,
Comes a low cry, and the sound
Of breath quick intaken through teeth
Clenched in resolve. And the Master
Breaks from the crowd, and goes,
Wiping his hands,
To the next bed, with his pupils
Flocking and whispering behind him.

Now one can see.
Case Number One
Sits (rather pale) with his bedclothes
Stripped up, and showing his foot
(Alas for God's Image !)
Swaddled in wet, white lint
Brilliantly hideous with red.

XII

ETCHING

Two and thirty is the ploughman.
He's a man of gallant inches,
And his hair is close and curly,
 And his beard ;

ETCHING

But his face is wan and sunken,
And his eyes are large and brilliant,
And his shoulder-blades are sharp,
And his knees.

He is weak of wits, religious,
Full of sentiment and yearning,
Gentle, faded—with a cough
And a snore.

When his wife (who was a widow,
And is many years his elder)
Fails to write, and that is always,
He desponds.

Let his melancholy wander,
And he 'll tell you pretty stories
Of the women that have wooed him
Long ago ;
Or he 'll sing of bonnie lasses
Keeping sheep among the heather
With a crackling, hackling click
In his voice.

XIII

CASUALTY

As with varnish red and glistening
Dripped his hair ; his feet looked rigid ;
Raised, he settled stiffly sideways :
You could see his hurts were spinal.

IN HOSPITAL

He had fallen from an engine,
And been dragged along the metals.
It was hopeless, and they knew it ;
So they covered him, and left him.

As he lay, by fits half sentient,
Inarticulately moaning,
With his stockinged soles protruded
Stark and awkward from the blankets,

To his bed there came a woman,
Stood and looked and sighed a little,
And departed without speaking,
As himself a few hours after.

I was told it was his sweetheart.
They were on the eve of marriage.
She was quiet as a statue,
But her lip was gray and writhen.

XIV

AVE, CAESAR !

FROM the winter's gray despair,
From the summer's golden languor,
Death, the lover of Life,
Frees us for ever.

Inevitable, silent, unseen,
Everywhere always,
Shadow by night and as light in the day,
Signs she at last to her chosen ;

‘ THE CHIEF ’

And, as she waves them forth,
Sorrow and Joy
Lay by their looks and their voices,
Set down their hopes, and are made
One in the dim Forever.

Into the winter's gray delight,
Into the summer's golden dream,
Holy and high and impartial,
Death, the mother of Life,
Mingles all men for ever.

xv

‘ THE CHIEF ’

HIS brow spreads large and placid, and his eye
Is deep and bright, with steady looks that still.
Soft lines of tranquil thought his face fulfill—
His face at once benign and proud and shy.
If envy scout, if ignorance deny,
His faultless patience, his unyielding will,
Beautiful gentleness and splendid skill,
Innumerable gratitudes reply.
His wise, rare smile is sweet with certainties,
And seems in all his patients to compel
Such love and faith as failure cannot quell.
We hold him for another Herakles,
Battling with custom, prejudice, disease,
As once the son of Zeus with Death and Hell.

IN HOSPITAL

XVI

HOUSE-SURGEON

EXCEEDING tall, but built so well his height
Half-disappears in flow of chest and limb ;
Moustache and whisker trooper-like in trim ;
Frank-faced, frank-eyed, frank-hearted ; always
 bright
And always punctual—morning, noon, and night ;
Bland as a Jesuit, sober as a hymn ;
Humorous, and yet without a touch of whim ;
Gentle and amiable, yet full of fight.
His piety, though fresh and true in strain,
Has not yet whitewashed up his common mood
To the dead blank of his particular Schism.
Sweet, unaggressive, tolerant, most humane,
Wild artists like his kindly elderhood,
And cultivate his mild Philistinism.

XVII

INTERLUDE

O, THE fun, the fun and frolic
 That *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*
Scatters through a penny-whistle
 Tickled with artistic fingers !

Kate the scrubber (forty summers,
 Stout but sportive) treads a measure,
Grinning, in herself a ballet,
 Fixed as fate upon her audience.

INTERLUDE

Stumps are shaking, crutch-supported ;
Splinted fingers tap the rhythm ;
And a head all helmed with plasters
Wags a measured approbation.

Of their mattress-life oblivious,
All the patients, brisk and cheerful,
Are encouraging the dancer,
And applauding the musician.

Dim the gas-lights in the output
Of so many ardent smokers,
Full of shadow lurch the corners,
And the doctor peeps and passes.

There are, maybe, some suspicions
Of an alcoholic presence . . .
'Tak' a sup of this, my wumman ! ' . . .
New Year comes but once a twelve-
month.

XVIII

CHILDREN : PRIVATE WARD

HERE in this dim, dull, double-bedded room,
I play the father to a brace of boys,
Ailing but apt for every sort of noise,
Bedfast but brilliant yet with health and bloom.
Roden, the Irishman, is ' sieven past,'
Blue-eyed, snub-nosed, chubby, and fair of face.
Willie's but six, and seems to like the place,
A cheerful little collier to the last.

IN HOSPITAL

They eat, and laugh, and sing, and fight, all
day ;
All night they sleep like dormice. See them
play
At Operations :—Roden, the Professor,
Saws, lectures, takes the artery up, and ties ;
Willie, self-chloroformed, with half-shut eyes,
Holding the limb and moaning — Case and
Dresser.

XIX

SCRUBBER

SHE 's tall and gaunt, and in her hard, sad face
With flashes of the old fun's animation
There lowers the fixed and peevish resignation
Bred of a past where troubles came apace.
She tells me that her husband, ere he died,
Saw seven of their children pass away,
And never knew the little lass at play
Out on the green, in whom he 's deified.
Her kin dispersed, her friends forgot and gone,
All simple faith her honest Irish mind,
Scolding her spoiled young saint, she labours
on :
Telling her dreams, taking her patients' part,
Trailing her coat sometimes : and you shall
find
No rougher, quainter speech, nor kinder heart.

VISITOR

xx

VISITOR

HER little face is like a walnut shell
With wrinkling lines ; her soft, white hair adorns
Her withered brows in quaint, straight curls, like
horns ;

And all about her clings an old, sweet smell.
Prim is her gown and quakerlike her shawl.
Well might her bonnets have been born on her.
Can you conceive a Fairy Godmother
The subject of a strong religious call ?
In snow or shine, from bed to bed she runs,
All twinkling smiles and texts and pious tales,
Her mittened hands, that ever give or pray,
Bearing a sheaf of tracts, a bag of buns :
A wee old maid that sweeps the Bridegroom's way,
Strong in a cheerful trust that never fails.

xxi

ROMANCE

' TALK of pluck ! ' pursued the Sailor,
Set at euchre on his elbow,
' I was on the wharf at Charleston,
Just ashore from off the runner.

' It was gray and dirty weather,
And I heard a drum go rolling,
Rub-a-dubbing in the distance
Awful dour-like and defiant.

IN HOSPITAL

- ' In and out among the cotton,
Mud, and chains, and stores, and anchors,
Tramped a squad of battered scarecrows—
Poor old Dixie's bottom dollar !
- ' Some had shoes, but all had rifles,
Them that wasn't bald was beardless,
And the drum was rolling *Dixie*,
And they stepped to it like men, sir !
- ' Rags and tatters, belts and bayonets,
On they swung, the drum a-rolling,
Mum and sour. It looked like fighting,
And they meant it too, by thunder !'

XXII

PASTORAL

It's the Spring.
Earth has conceived, and her bosom,
Teeming with summer, is glad.

Vistas of change and adventure,
Thro' the green land
The gray roads go beckoning and winding,
Peopled with wains, and melodious
With harness-bells jangling :
Jangling and twangling rough rhythms
To the slow march of the stately, great horses
Whistled and shouted along.

PASTORAL

White fleets of cloud,
Argosies heavy with fruitfulness,
Sail the blue peacefully. Green flame the hedge-
rows.

Blackbirds are bugling, and white in wet winds
Sway the tall poplars.

Pageants of colour and fragrance,
Pass the sweet meadows, and viewless
Walks the mild spirit of May,
Visibly blessing the world.

O, the brilliance of blossoming orchards !
O, the savour and thrill of the woods,
When their leafage is stirred
By the flight of the Angel of Rain !
Loud lows the steer ; in the fallows
Rooks are alert ; and the brooks
Gurgle and tinkle and trill. Thro' the gloam-
ings,
Under the rare, shy stars,
Boy and girl wander,
Dreaming in darkness and dew.

It 's the Spring.
A sprightliness feeble and squalid
Wakes in the ward, and I sicken,
Impotent, winter at heart.

IN HOSPITAL

XXIII

MUSIC

Down the quiet eve,
Thro' my window with the sunset
Pipes to me a distant organ
Foolish ditties ;

And, as when you change
Pictures in a magic lantern,
Books, beds, bottles, floor, and ceiling
Fade and vanish,

And I 'm well once more. . . .
August flares adust and torrid,
But my heart is full of April
Sap and sweetness.

In the quiet eve
I am loitering, longing, dreaming . . .
Dreaming, and a distant organ
Pipes me ditties.

I can see the shop,
I can smell the sprinkled pavement,
Where she serves—her chestnut chignon
Thrills my senses !

O, the sight and scent,
Wistful eve and perfumed pavement !
In the distance pipes an organ . . .
The sensation

SUICIDE

Comes to me anew,
And my spirit for a moment
Thro' the music breathes the blessed
Airs of London.

XXIV

SUICIDE

STARING corpselike at the ceiling,
See his harsh, unrazored features,
Ghastly brown against the pillow,
And his throat—so strangely bandaged !

Lack of work and lack of victuals,
A debauch of smuggled whisky,
And his children in the workhouse
Made the world so black a riddle

That he plunged for a solution ;
And, although his knife was edgeless,
He was sinking fast towards one,
When they came, and found, and saved him.

Stupid now with shame and sorrow,
In the night I hear him sobbing.
But sometimes he talks a little.
He has told me all his troubles.

In his broad face, tanned and bloodless,
White and wild his eyeballs glisten ;
And his smile, occult and tragic,
Yet so slavish, makes you shudder !

IN HOSPITAL

xxv

APPARITION

THIN-LEGGED, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered : in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched
 with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist :
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

xxvi

ANTEROTICS

LAUGHS the happy April morn
 Thro' my grimy, little window,
And a shaft of sunshine pushes
 Thro' the shadows in the square.

Dogs are tracing thro' the grass,
Crows are cawing round the chimneys,
In and out among the washing
Goes the West at hide-and-seek.

NOCTURN

Loud and cheerful clangs the bell.
Here the nurses troop to breakfast.
Handsome, ugly, all are women . . .
O, the Spring—the Spring—the Spring !

XXVII

NOCTURN

At the barren heart of midnight,
When the shadow shuts and opens
As the loud flames pulse and flutter,
I can hear a cistern leaking.

Dripping, dropping, in a rhythm,
Rough, unequal, half-melodious,
Like the measures aped from nature
In the infancy of music ;

Like the buzzing of an insect,
Still, irrational, persistent . . .
I must listen, listen, listen
In a passion of attention ;

Till it taps upon my heartstrings,
And my very life goes dripping,
Dropping, dripping, drip-drip-dropping,
In the drip-drop of the cistern.

IN HOSPITAL

XXVIII

DISCHARGED

CARRY me out
Into the wind and the sunshine,
Into the beautiful world.

O, the wonder, the spell of the streets !
The stature and strength of the horses,
The rustle and echo of footfalls,
The flat roar and rattle of wheels !
A swift tram floats huge on us . . .
It 's a dream ?
The smell of the mud in my nostrils
Blows brave—like a breath of the sea !

As of old,
Ambulant, undulant drapery
Vaguely and strangely provocative,
Flutters and beckons. O, yonder—
Is it ?—the gleam of a stocking !
Sudden, a spire
Wedged in the mist ! O, the houses,
The long lines of lofty, gray houses,
Cross-hatched with shadow and light !
These are the streets. . . .
Each is an avenue leading
Whither I will !

Free . . . !
Dizzy, hysterical, faint,
I sit, and the carriage rolls on with me
Into the wonderful world.

ENVOY

ENVOY

To CHARLES BAXTER

Do you remember
That afternoon—that Sunday afternoon !—
When, as the kirks were ringing in,
And the gray city teemed
With Sabbath feelings and aspects,
LEWIS—our LEWIS then,
Now the whole world's—and you,
Young, yet in shape most like an elder, came,
Laden with BALZACS
(Big, yellow books, quite impudently French),
The first of many times
To that transformed back-kitchen where I lay
So long, so many centuries—
Or years is it !—ago ?

Dear CHARLES, since then
We have been friends, LEWIS and you and I,
(How good it sounds, ' LEWIS and you and I ! '):
Such friends, I like to think,
That in us three, LEWIS and me and you,
Is something of that gallant dream
Which old DUMAS—the generous, the humane,
The seven-and-seventy times to be forgiven !—
Dreamed for a blessing to the race,
The immortal *Musketeers*.

Our ARTHUR rests—the wise, the kind,
The liberal and august, his fault atoned,
Rests in the crowded yard

IN HOSPITAL

There at the west of Princes Street. We three—
You, I, and LEWIS !—still afoot,
Are still together, and our lives,
In chime so long, may keep
(God bless the thought !)
Unjangled till the end.

W. E. H.

CHISWICK, *March* 1888.

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

(To Rudyard Kipling)

1890



The Sword

Singing—

*The voice of the Sword from the heart of
the Sword*

Clanging imperious

Forth from Time's battlements

His ancient and triumphing Song.

In the beginning,
Ere God inspired Himself
Into the clay thing
Thumbed to His image,
The vacant, the naked shell
Soon to be Man :
Thoughtful He pondered it,
Prone there and impotent,
Fragile, inviting
Attack and discomfiture ;
Then, with a smile—
As He heard in the Thunder
That laughed over Eden
The voice of the Trumpet,
The iron Beneficence,
Calling his dooms
To the Winds of the world—
Stooping, He drew

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

On the sand with His finger
A shape for a sign
Of his way to the eyes
That in wonder should waken,
For a proof of His will
To the breaking intelligence.
That was the birth of me :
I am the Sword.

Bleak and lean, gray and cruel,
Short-hilted, long-shafted,
I froze into steel ;
And the blood of my elder,
His hands on the hafts of me,
Sprang like a wave
In the wind, as the sense
Of his strength grew to ecstasy;
Glowed like a coal
In the throat of the furnace ;
As he knew me and named me
The War-Thing, the Comrade,
Father of honour
And giver of kingship,
The fame-smith, the song-master,
Bringer of women
On fire at his hands
For the pride of fulfilment,
Priest (saith the Lord)
Of his marriage with victory.
Ho ! then, the Trumpet,
Handmaid of heroes,
Calling the peers
To the place of espousals !

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

Ho ! then, the splendour
And glare of my ministry,
Clothing the earth
With a livery of lightnings !
Ho ! then, the music
Of battles in onset,
And ruining armours,
And God's gift returning
In fury to God !
Thrilling and keen
As the song of the winter stars,
Ho ! then, the sound
Of my voice, the implacable
Angel of Destiny !—
I am the Sword.

Heroes, my children,
Follow, O, follow me !
Follow, exulting
In the great light that breaks
From the sacred Companionship !
Thrust through the fatuous,
Thrust through the fungous brood,
Spawned in my shadow
And gross with my gift !
Thrust through, and hearken,
O, hark, to the Trumpet,
The Virgin of Battles,
Calling, still calling you
Into the Presence,
Sons of the Judgment,
Pure wafts of the Will !
Edged to annihilate,

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

Hilted with government,
Follow, O, follow me,
Till the waste places
All the gray globe over
Ooze, as the honeycomb
Drips, with the sweetness
Distilled of my strength,
And, teeming in peace
Through the wrath of my coming,
They give back in beauty
The dread and the anguish
They had of me visitant !
Follow, O follow, then,
Heroes, my harvesters !
Where the tall grain is ripe
Thrust in your sickles !
Stripped and adust
In a stubble of empire,
Scything and binding
The full sheaves of sovranty :
Thus, O, thus gloriously,
Shall you fulfil yourselves !
Thus, O, thus mightily,
Show yourselves sons of mine—
Yea, and win grace of me :
I am the Sword !

I am the feast-maker :
Hark, through a noise
Of the screaming of eagles,
Hark how the Trumpet,
The mistress of mistresses,
Calls, silver-throated

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

And stern, where the tables
Are spread, and the meal
Of the Lord is in hand !
Driving the darkness,
Even as the banners
And spears of the Morning ;
Sifting the nations,
The slag from the metal,
The waste and the weak
From the fit and the strong ;
Fighting the brute,
The abysmal Fecundity ;
Checking the gross,
Multitudinous blunders,
The groping, the purblind
Excesses in service
Of the Womb universal,
The absolute drudge ;
Firing the charactry
Carved on the World,
The miraculous gem
In the seal-ring that burns
On the hand of the Master—
Yea ! and authority
Flames through the dim,
Unappeasable Grisliness
Prone down the nethermost
Chasms of the Void !—
Clear singing, clean slicing ;
Sweet spoken, soft finishing ;
Making death beautiful,
Life but a coin
To be staked in the pastime

THE SONG OF THE SWORD

Whose playing is more
Than the transfer of being ;
Arch-anarch, chief builder,
Prince and evangelist,
I am the Will of God :
I am the Sword.

The Sword

Singing—

*The voice of the Sword from the heart of
the Sword*

*Clanging majestic,
As from the starry-staired
Courts of the primal Supremacy,
His high, irresistible song.*

ARABIAN NIGHTS'
ENTERTAINMENTS

(*To* Elizabeth Robbins Pennell)

1893

‘O mes chères *Mille et Une Nuits*!’—*Fantasio*.

ONCE on a time
There was a little boy : a master-mage
By virtue of a Book
Of magic—O, so magical it filled
His life with visionary pomps
Processional ! And Powers
Passed with him where he passed. And Thrones
And Dominations, glaived and plumed and mailed,
Thronged in the criss-cross streets,
The palaces pell-mell with playing fields,
Domes, cloisters, dungeons, caverns, tents, ar-
cades,
Of the unseen, silent City, in his soul
Pavilioned jealousy, and hid
As in the dusk, profound,
Green stillnesses of some enchanted
mere.— — —

I shut mine eyes. . . . And lo !
A flickering snatch of memory that floats
Upon the face of a pool of darkness five
And thirty dead years deep,
Antic in girlish broideries
And skirts and silly shoes with straps
And a broad-ribanded leghorn, he walks
Plain in the shadow of a church

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

(St. Michael's : in whose brazen call
To curfew his first wails of wrath were whelmed),
Sedate for all his haste
To be at home ; and, nestled in his arm,
Inciting still to quiet and solitude,
Boarded in sober drab,
With small, square, agitating cuts
Let in a-top of the double-columned, close,
Quakerlike print, a Book ! . . .
What but that blessed brief
Of what is gallantest and best
In all the full-shelved Libraries of Romance ?
The Book of rocs,
Sandalwood, ivory, turbans, ambergris,
Cream-tarts, and lettered apes, and calendars,
And ghouls, and genies—O, so huge
They might have overed the tall Minster Tower
Hands down, as schoolboys take a post !
In truth, the Book of Camaralzaman,
Schemselnihar and Sindbad, Scheherezade
The peerless, Bedreddin, Badroulbador,
Cairo and Serendib and Candahar,
And Caspian, and the dim, terrific bulk—
Ice-ribbed, fiend-visited, isled in spells and
storms—
Of Kaf ! . . . That centre of miracles,
The sole, unparalleled Arabian Nights !

Old friends I had a-many—kindly and grim
Familiars, cronies quaint
And goblin ! Never a Wood but housed
Some morrice of dainty dapperlings. No Brook
But had his nunnery

ENTERTAINMENTS

Of green-haired, silvry-curving sprites,
To cabin in his grots, and pace
His liliated margents. Every lone Hillside
Might open upon Elf-Land. Every Stalk
That curled about a Bean-stick was of the breed
Of that live ladder by whose delicate rungs
You climbed beyond the clouds, and found
The Farm-House where the Ogre, gorged
And drowsy, from his great oak chair,
Among the flitches and pewters at the fire,
Called for his Faëry Harp. And in it flew,
And, perching on the kitchen table, sang
Jocund and jubilant, with a sound
Of those gay, golden-vowelled madrigals
The shy thrush at mid-May
Flutes from wet orchards flushed with the triumph-
ing dawn ;
Or blackbirds rioting as they listened still,
In old-world woodlands rapt with an old-world
spring,
For Pan's own whistle, savage and rich and
lewd,
And mocked him call for call !

I could not pass
The half-door where the cobbler sat in view
Nor figure me the wizen Leprechaun,
In square-cut, faded reds and buckle-shoes,
Bent at his work in the hedge-side, and know
Just how he tapped his brogue, and twitched
His wax-end this and that way, both with wrists
And elbows. In the rich June fields,
Where the ripe clover drew the bees,

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

And the tall quakers trembled, and the West
Wind

Lolled his half-holiday away
Beside me lolling and lounging through my own,
'Twas good to follow the Miller's Youngest Son
On his white horse along the leafy lanes ;
For at his stirrup linked and ran,
Not cynical and trapesing, as he loped
From wall to wall above the espaliers,
But in the bravest tops
That market-town, a town of tops, could show :
Bold, subtle, adventurous, his tail
A banner flaunted in disdain
Of human stratagems and shifts :
King over All the Catlands, present and past
And future, that moustached
Artificer of fortunes, Puss-in-Boots !
Or Bluebeard's Closet, with its plenishing
Of meat-hooks, sawdust, blood,
And wives that hung like fresh-dressed carcasses—
Odd-fangled, most a butcher's, part
A faëry chamber hazily seen
And hazily figured—on dark afternoons
And windy nights was visiting of the best.
Then, too, the pelt of hoofs
Out in the roaring darkness told
Of Herne the Hunter in his antlered helm
Galloping, as with despatches from the Pit,
Between his hell-born Hounds.
And Rip Van Winkle . . . often I lurked to
hear,
Outside the long, low timbered, tarry wall,
The mutter and rumble of the trolling bowls

ENTERTAINMENTS

Down the lean plank, before they fluttered the
pins ;

For, listening, I could help him play
His wonderful game,
In those blue, booming hills, with Mariners
Refreshed from kegs not coopered in this our
world.

But what were these so near,
So neighbourly fancies to the spell that brought
The run of Ali Baba's Cave
Just for the saying ' Open Sesame,'
With gold to measure, peck by peck,
In round, brown wooden stoups
You borrowed at the chandler's ? . . . Or one
time

Made you Aladdin's friend at school,
Free of his Garden of Jewels, Ring and Lamp
In perfect trim ? . . . Or Ladies, fair
For all the embrowning scars in their white
breasts,

Went labouring under some dread ordinance,
Which made them whip, and bitterly cry the
while,

Strange Curs that cried as they,
Till there was never a Black Bitch of all
Your consorting but might have gone
Spell-driven miserably for crimes
Done in the pride of womanhood and desire . . .
Or at the ghostliest altitudes of night,
While you lay wondering and acold,
Your sense was fearfully purged ; and soon
Queen Labé, abominable and dear,
Rose from your side, opened the Box of Doom,

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

Scattered the yellow powder (which I saw
Like sulphur at the Docks in bulk),
And muttered certain words you could not hear ;
And there ! a living stream,
The brook you bathed in, with its weeds and
 flags
And cresses, glittered and sang
Out of the hearthrug over the nakedness,
Fair-scrubbed and decent, of your bedroom
 floor ! . . .

I was—how many a time !—
That Second Calendar, Son of a King,
On whom 'twas vehemently enjoined,
Pausing at one mysterious door,
To pry no closer, but content his soul
With his kind Forty. Yet I could not rest
For idleness and ungovernable Fate.
And the Black Horse, which fed on sesame
(That wonder-working word !)
Vouchsafed his back to me, and spread his vans,
And soaring, soaring on
From air to air, came charging to the ground
Sheer, like a lark from the midsummer clouds,
And, shaking me out of the saddle, where I
 sprawled
Flicked at me with his tail,
And left me blinded, miserable, distraught
(Even as I was in deed,
When doctors came, and odious things were done
On my poor tortured eyes
With lancets ; or some evil acid stung
And wrung them like hot sand,

ENTERTAINMENTS

And desperately from room to room
Fumble I must my dark, disconsolate way),
To get to Bagdad how I might. But there
I met with Merry Ladies. O you three—
Safie, Amine, Zobëidé—when my heart
Forgets you, all shall be forgot !
And so we supped, we and the rest,
On wine and roasted lamb, rose-water, dates,
Almonds, pistachios, citrons. And Haroun
Laughed out of his lordly beard
On Giaffar and Mesrour (*I knew the Three*
For all their Mossoul habits). And outside
The Tigris, flowing swift
Like Severn bend for bend, twinkled and gleamed
With broken and wavering shapes of stranger
stars ;
The vast, blue night
Was murmurous with peris' plumes
And the leathern wings of genies ; words of
power
Were whispering ; and old fishermen,
Casting their nets with prayer, might draw to
shore
Dead loveliness : or a prodigy in scales
Worth in the Caliph's Kitchen pieces of gold :
Or copper vessels, stopped with lead,
Wherein some Squire of Eblis watched and railed,
In durance under potent charactry
Graven by the seal of Solomon the King. . . .
Then, as the Book was glassed
In Life as in some olden mirror's quaint,
Bewildering angles, so would Life
Flash light on light back on the Book ; and both

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

Were changed. Once in a house decayed
From better days, harbouring an errant show
(For all its stories of dry-rot
Were filled with gruesome visitants in wax,
Inhuman, hushed, ghastly with Painted Eyes),
I wandered ; and no living soul
Was nearer than the pay-box ; and I stared
Upon them staring—staring. Till at last,
Three sets of rafters from the streets,
I strayed upon a mildewed, rat-run room,
With the two Dancers, horrible and obscene,
Guarding the door : and there, in a bedroom-set,
Behind a fence of faded crimson cords,
With an aspect of frills
And dimities and dishonoured privacy
That made you hanker and hesitate to look,
A Woman with her litter of Babes—all slain,
All in their nightgowns, all with Painted Eyes
Staring—still staring ; so that I turned and ran
As for my neck, but in the street
Took breath. The same, it seemed,
And yet not all the same, I was to find,
As I went up ! For afterwards,
Whenas I went my round alone—
All day alone—in long, stern, silent streets,
Where I might stretch my hand and take
Whatever I would : still there were Shapes of
Stone,
Motionless, lifelike, frightening—for the Wrath
Had smitten them ; but they watched,
This by her melons and figs, that by his rings
And chains and watches, with the hideous gaze,
The Painted Eyes insufferable,

ENTERTAINMENTS

Now, of those grisly images ; and I
Pursued my best-belovéd quest,
Thrilled with a novel and delicious fear.
So the night fell—with never a lamplighter ;
And through the Palace of the King
I groped among the echoes, and I felt
That they were there,
Dreadfully there, the Painted staring Eyes,
Hall after hall . . . Till lo ! from far
A Voice ! And in a little while
Two tapers burning ! And the Voice,
Heard in the wondrous Word of God, was—
whose ?

Whose but Zobëidé's,
The lady of my heart, like me
A True Believer, and like me
An outcast thousands of leagues beyond the
pale ! . . .

Or, sailing to the Isles
Of Khaledan, I spied one evenfall
A black blotch in the sunset ; and it grew
Swiftly . . . and grew. Tearing their beards,
The sailors wept and prayed ; but the grave
ship,
Deep laden with spiceries and pearls, went mad,
Wrenched the long tiller out of the steersman's
hand,
And, turning broadside on,
As the most iron would, was haled and sucked
Nearer, and nearer yet ;
And, all awash, with horrible lurching leaps
Rushed at that Portent, casting a shadow now

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

That swallowed sea and sky ; and then,
Anchors and nails and bolts
Flew screaming out of her, and with clang on
 clang,
A noise of fifty stithies, caught at the sides
Of the Magnetic Mountain ; and she lay,
A broken bundle of firewood, strown piecemeal
About the waters ; and her crew
Passed shrieking, one by one ; and I was left
To drown. All the long night I swam ;
But in the morning, O, the smiling coast
Tufted with date-trees, meadowlike,
Skirted with shelving sands ! And a great wave
Cast me ashore ; and I was saved alive.
So, giving thanks to God, I dried my clothes,
And, faring inland, in a desert place
I stumbled on an iron ring—
The fellow of fifty built into the Quays :
When, scenting a trap-door,
I dug, and dug ; until my biggest blade
Stuck into wood. And then,
The flight of smooth-hewn, easy-falling stairs,
Sunk in the naked rock ! The cool, clean vault,
So neat with niche on niche it might have been
Our beer-cellar but for the rows
Of brazen urns (like monstrous chemist's jars)
Full to the wide, squat throats
With gold-dust, but a-top
A layer of pickled-walnut-looking things
I knew for olives ! And far, O, far away,
The Princess of China languished ! Far away
Was marriage, with a Vizier and a Chief
Of Eunuchs and the privilege

ENTERTAINMENTS

Of going out at night
To play—unkenned, majestic, secure—
Where the old, brown, friendly river shaped
Like Tigris shore for shore ! Haply a Ghoul
Sat in the churchyard under a frightened moon,
A thighbone in his fist, and glared
At supper with a Lady : she who took
Her rice with tweezers grain by grain.
Or you might stumble—there by the iron gates
Of the Pump Room—underneath the limes—
Upon Bedreddin in his shirt and drawers,
Just as the civil Genie laid him down.
Or those red-curtained panes,
Whence a tame cornet tenored it throatily
Of beer-pots and spittoons and new long pipes,
Might turn a caravansery's, wherein
You found Nouredin Ali, loftily drunk,
And that fair Persian, bathed in tears,
You 'd not have given away
For all the diamonds in the Vale Perilous
You had that dark and disleaved afternoon
Escaped on a roc's claw,
Disguised like Sindbad—but in Christmas beef !
And all the blissful while
The schoolboy satchel at your hip
Was such a bulse of gems as should amaze
Gray-whiskered chapmen drawn
From over Caspian : yea, the Chief Jewellers
Of Tartary and the bazaars,
Seething with traffic, of enormous Ind. — — —

Thus cried, thus called aloud, to the child heart
The magian East : thus the child eyes

ARABIAN NIGHTS'

Spelled out the wizard message by the light
Of the sober, workaday hours
They saw, week in week out, pass, and still pass
In the sleepy Minster City, folded kind
In ancient Severn's arm,
Amongst her water-meadows and her docks,
Whose floating populace of ships—
Galliot and luggers, light-heeled brigantines,
Bluff barques and rake-hell fore-and-afters—
brought
To her very doorsteps and geraniums
The scents of the World's End ; the calls
That may not be gainsaid to rise and ride
Like fire on some high errand of the race ;
The irresistible appeals
For comradeship that sound
Steadily from the irresistible sea.
Thus the East laughed and whispered, and the
tale,
Telling itself anew
In terms of living, labouring life,
Took on the colours, busked it in the wear
Of life that lived and laboured ; and Romance,
The Angel-Playmate, raining down
His golden influences
On all I saw, and all I dreamed and did,
Walked with me arm in arm,
Or left me, as one bediadem'd with straws
And bits of glass, to gladden at my heart
Who had the gift to seek and feel and find
His fiery-hearted presence everywhere.
Even so dear Hesper, bringer of all good things,
Sends the same silver dews

ENTERTAINMENTS

Of happiness down her dim, delighted skies
On some poor collier-hamlet—(mound on mound
Of sifted squalor ; here a soot-throated stalk
Sullenly smoking over a row
Of flat-faced hovels ; black in the gritty air
A web of rails and wheels and beams ; with
strings
Of hurtling, tipping trams)—
As on the amorous nightingales
And roses of Shíraz, or the walls and towers
Of Samarcand—the Ineffable—whence you espy
The splendour of Ginnistan's embattled spears,
Like listed lightnings.

Samarcand !

That name of names ! That star-vaned belvedere
Builded against the Chambers of the South !
That outpost on the Infinite !

And behold !

Questing therefrom, you knew not what wild tide
Might overtake you : for one fringe
One suburb, is stablished on firm earth ; but one
Floats founded vague
In lubberlands delectable—isles of palm
And lotus, fortunate mains, far-shimmering seas,
The promise of wistful hills—
The shining, shifting Sovranties of Dream.



BRIC-À-BRAC

1877-1888

'The tune of the time.'—HAMLET, concerning OSRIC.

BALLADE
OF A TOYOKUNI COLOUR-PRINT

To W. A.

WAS I a Samurai renowned,
Two-sworded, fierce, immense of bow ?
A histriion angular and profound ?
A priest ? a porter ?—Child, although
I have forgotten clean, I know
That in the shade of Fujisan,
What time the cherry-orchards blow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

As here you loiter, flowing-gowned
And hugely sashed, with pins a-row
Your quaint head as with flamelets crowned,
Demure, inviting—even so,
When merry maids in Miyako
To feel the sweet o' the year began,
And green gardens to overflow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

Clear shine the hills ; the rice-fields round
Two cranes are circling ; sleepy and slow,
A blue canal the lake's blue bound
Breaks at the bamboo bridge ; and lo !

BRIC-À-BRAC

Touched with the sundown's spirit and glow,
I see you turn, with flirted fan,
Against the plum-tree's bloomy snow. . . .
I loved you once in old Japan !

Envoy

Dear, 'twas a dozen lives ago ;
But that I was a lucky man
The Toyokuni here will show :
I loved you—once—in old Japan.

BALLADE (DOUBLE REFRAIN) OF YOUTH AND AGE

I. M.

Thomas Edward Brown
(1829-1896)

SPRING at her height on a morn at prime,
Sails that laugh from a flying squall,
Pomp of harmony, rapture of rhyme—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
Winter sunsets and leaves that fall,
An empty flagon, a folded page,
A tumble-down wheel, a tattered ball—
These are a type of the world of Age.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Bells that clash in a gaudy chime,
Swords that clatter in onsets tall,
The words that ring and the fames that climb—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
Hymnals old in a dusty stall,
A bald, blind bird in a crazy cage,
The scene of a faded festival—
These are a type of the world of Age.

Hours that strut as the heirs of time,
Deeds whose rumour 's a clarion-call,
Songs where the singers their souls sublime—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
A staff that rests in a nook of wall,
A reeling battle, a rusted gage,
The chant of a nearing funeral—
These are a type of the world of Age.

Envoy

Struggle and turmoil, revel and brawl—
Youth is the sign of them, one and all.
A smouldering hearth and a silent stage—
These are a type of the world of Age.

BRIC-À-BRAC

BALLADE

(DOUBLE REFRAIN)

OF MIDSUMMER DAYS AND NIGHTS

To W. H.

WITH a ripple of leaves and a tinkle of streams
The full world rolls in a rhythm of praise,
And the winds are one with the clouds and
beams—

Midsummer days ! Midsummer days !
The dusk grows vast ; in a purple haze,
While the West from a rapture of sunset rights,
Faint stars their exquisite lamps upraise—
Midsummer nights ! O midsummer nights !

The wood's green heart is a nest of dreams,
The lush grass thickens and springs and sways,
The rathe wheat rustles, the landscape gleams—
Midsummer days ! Midsummer days !
In the stilly fields, in the stilly ways,
All secret shadows and mystic lights,
Late lovers murmur and linger and gaze—
Midsummer nights ! O midsummer nights !

There's a music of bells from the trampling
teams,
Wild skylarks hover, the gorses blaze,
The rich, ripe rose as with incense steams—
Midsummer days ! Midsummer days !

BRIC-À-BRAC

A soul from the honeysuckle strays,
And the nightingale as from prophet heights
Sings to the Earth of her million Mays—
Midsummer nights ! O midsummer nights !

Envoy

And it's O, for my dear and the charm that
 stays—
Midsummer days ! Midsummer days !
It's O, for my Love and the dark that plights—
Midsummer nights ! O midsummer nights !

BALLADE OF DEAD ACTORS

I. M.

Edward John Henley
(1861-1898)

WHERE are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow ?
Where the wild humours they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know ?
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe ?
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall ?
And Millamant and Romeo ?
Into the night go one and all.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed ?
The plumes, the armours—friend and foe ?
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,
The mantles glittering to and fro ?
The pomp, the pride, the royal show ?
The cries of war and festival ?
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow ?
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played :
The Beggar packs beside the Beau ;
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid ;
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.
Where are the revellers high and low ?
The clashing swords ? The lover's call ?
The dancers gleaming row on row ?
Into the night go one and all.

Envoy

Prince, in one common overthrow
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall :
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,
Into the night go one and all.

BRIC-À-BRAC

BALLADE MADE IN THE HOT WEATHER

To C. M.

FOUNTAINS that frisk and sprinkle
The moss they overspill ;
Pools that the breezes crinkle ;
The wheel beside the mill,
With its wet, weedy frill ;
Wind-shadows in the wheat ;
A water-cart in the street ;
The fringe of foam that girds
An islet's ferneries ;
A green sky's minor thirds—
To live, I think of these !

Of ice and glass the tinkle,
Pellucid, silver-shrill ;
Peaches without a wrinkle ;
Cherries and snow at will,
From china bowls that fill
The senses with a sweet
Incuriousness of heat ;
A melon's dripping sherds ;
Cream-clotted strawberries ;
Dusk dairies set with curds—
To live, I think of these !

Vale-lily and periwinkle ;
Wet stone-crop on the sill ;
The look of leaves a-twinkle

BRIC-À-BRAC

With windlets clear and still ;
The feel of a forest rill
That wimples fresh and fleet
About one's naked feet ;
The muzzles of drinking herds ;
Lush flags and bulrushes ;
The chirp of rain-bound birds—
To live, I think of these !

Envoy

Dark aisles, new packs of cards,
Mermaidens' tails, cool swords,
Dawn dew and starlit seas,
White marbles, whiter words—
To live, I think of these !

BALLADE OF TRUISMS

GOLD or silver, every day,
Dies to gray.
There are knots in every skein.
Hours of work and hours of play
Fade away
Into one immense Inane.
Shadow and substance, chaff and grain,
Are as vain
As the foam or as the spray.
Life goes crooning, faint and fain,
One refrain :—
' If it could be always May ! '

BRIC-À-BRAC

Though the earth be green and gay,
 Though, they say,
Man the cup of heaven may drain ;
Though, his little world to sway
 He display
Hoard on hoard of pith and brain :
Autumn brings a mist and rain
 That constrain
Him and his to know decay,
Where undimmed the lights that wane
 Would remain,
If it could be always May.

Yea, alas, must turn to *Nay*,
 Flesh to clay.
Chance and Time are ever twain.
Men may scoff, and men may pray,
 But they pay
Every pleasure with a pain.
Life may soar, and Fortune deign
 To explain
Where her prizes hide and stay ;
But we lack the lusty train
 We should gain,
If it could be always May.

Envoy

Time, the pedagogue, his cane
 Might retain,
But his charges all would stray
Truanting in every lane—
 Jack with Jane—
If it could be always May.

BRIC-À-BRAC

DOUBLE BALLADE OF LIFE AND FATE

Fools may pine, and sots may swill,
Cynics gibe, and prophets rail,
Moralists may scourge and drill,
Preachers prose, and fainthearts quail.
Let them whine, or threat, or wail !
Till the touch of Circumstance
Down to darkness sink the scale,
Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.

What if skies be wan and chill ?
What if winds be harsh and stale ?
Presently the east will thrill,
And the sad and shrunken sail,
Bellying with a kindly gale,
Bear you sunwards, while your chance
Sends you back the hopeful hail :—
' Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.'

Idle shot or coming bill,
Hapless love or broken bail,
Gulp it (never chew your pill !),
And, if Burgundy should fail,
Try the humbler pot of ale !
Over all is heaven's expanse.
Gold 's to find among the shale.
Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Dull Sir Joskin sleeps his fill,
Good Sir Galahad seeks the Grail,
Proud Sir Pertinax flaunts his frill,
Hard Sir Æger dints his mail ;
And the while by hill and dale
Tristram's braveries gleam and glance,
And his blithe horn tells its tale :—
' Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.'

Araminta 's grand and shrill,
Delia 's passionate and frail,
Doris drives an earnest quill,
Athanasia takes the veil :
Wiser Phyllis o'er her pail,
At the heart of all romance
Reading, sings to Strephon's fail :—
' Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.'

Every Jack must have his Jill
(Even Johnson had his Thrale !) :
Forward, couples—with a will !
This, the world, is not a jail.
Hear the music, sprat and whale !
Hands across, retire, advance !
Though the doomsman 's on your trail,
Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.

Envoy

Boys and girls, at slug and snail
And their kindred look askance.
Pay your footing on the nail :
Fate 's a fiddler, Life 's a dance.

BRIC-À-BRAC

DOUBLE BALLADE OF THE NOTHINGNESS OF THINGS

THE big teetotum twirls,
And epochs wax and wane
As chance subsides or swirls ;
But of the loss and gain
The sum is always plain.
Read on the mighty pall,
The weed of funeral
That covers praise and blame,
The -isms and the -anities,
Magnificence and shame :—
' O Vanity of Vanities ! '

The Fates are subtile girls !
They give us chaff for grain.
And Time, the Thunderer, hurls,
Like bolted death, disdain
At all that heart and brain
Conceive, or great or small,
Upon this earthly ball.
Would you be knight and dame ?
Or woo the sweet humanities ?
Or illustrate a name ?
O Vanity of Vanities !

We sound the sea for pearls,
Or drown them in a drain ;
We flute it with the merles,
Or tug and sweat and strain ;
We grovel, or we reign ;

BRIC-À-BRAC

We saunter, or we brawl ;
We answer, or we call ;
We search the stars for Fame,
Or sink her subterraneanities ;
The legend 's still the same :—
' O Vanity of Vanities ! '

Here at the wine one birls,
There some one clanks a chain.
The flag that this man furls
That man to float is fain.
Pleasure gives place to pain :
These in the kennel crawl,
While others take the wall.
She has a glorious aim,
He lives for the inanities.
What comes of every claim ?
O Vanity of Vanities !

Alike are clods and earls.
For sot, and seer, and swain,
For emperors and for churls,
For antidote and bane,
There is but one refrain :
But one for king and thrall,
For David and for Saul,
For fleet of foot and lame,
For pieties and profanities,
The picture and the frame :—
' O Vanity of Vanities ! '

Life is a smoke that curls—
Curls in a flickering skein,
That winds and whisks and whirls,

BRIC-À-BRAC

A figment thin and vain,
Into the vast Inane.
One end for hut and hall !
One end for cell and stall !
Burned in one common flame
Are wisdoms and insanities.
For this alone we came :—
' O Vanity of Vanities ! '

Envoy

Prince, pride must have a fall.
What is the worth of all
Your state's supreme urbanities ?
Bad at the best 's the game.
Well might the Sage exclaim :—
' O Vanity of Vanities ! '

AT QUEENSFERRY

To W. G. S.

THE blackbird sang, the skies were clear and
clean ;
We bowled along a road that curved a spine
Superbly sinuous and serpentine
Thro' silent symphonies of summer green.
Sudden the Forth came on us—sad of mien,
No cloud to colour it, no breeze to line :
A sheet of dark, dull glass, without a sign
Of life or death, two spits of sand between.
Water and sky merged blank in mist together,

BRIC-À-BRAC

The Fort loomed spectral, and the Guardship's
spars
Traced vague, black shadows on the shimmery
glaze :
We felt the dim, strange years, the gray, strange
weather,
The still, strange land, unvexed of sun or stars,
Where Lancelot rides clanking thro' the haze.

ORIENTALE

SHE 's an enchanting little Israelite,
A world of hidden dimples !—Dusky-eyed,
A starry-glancing daughter of the Bride,
With hair escaped from some Arabian Night,
Her lip is red, her cheek is golden-white,
Her nose a scimitar ; and, set aside
The bamboo hat she cocks with so much pride,
Her dress a dream of daintiness and delight.
And when she passes with the dreadful boys
And romping girls, the cockneys loud and
crude,
My thought, to the Minories tied yet moved to
range
The Land o' the Sun, commingles with the
noise
Of magian drums and scents of sandalwood
A touch Sidonian—modern—taking—strange !

BRIC-À-BRAC

IN FISHERROW

A HARD north-easter fifty winters long
Has bronzed and shrivelled sere her face and neck;
Her locks are wild and gray, her teeth a wreck ;
Her foot is vast, her bowed leg spare and strong.
A wide blue cloak, a squat and sturdy throng
Of curt blue coats, a mutch without a speck,
A white vest broidered black, her person deck,
Nor seems their picked, stern, old-world quaint-
ness wrong.
Her great creel forehead-slung, she wanders nigh,
Easing the heavy strap with gnarled, brown
fingers,
The spirit of traffic watchful in her eye,
Ever and anon imploring you to buy,
As looking down the street she onward lingers,
Reproachful, with a strange and doleful cry.

BACK-VIEW

To D. F.

I WATCHED you saunter down the sand :
Serene and large, the golden weather
Flowed radiant round your peacock feather,
And glistened from your jewelled hand.
Your tawny hair, turned strand on strand
And bound with blue ribands together,
Streaked the rough tartan, green like heather,

BRIC-À-BRAC

That round your lissome shoulder spanned.
Your grace was quick my sense to seize :
The quaint looped hat, the twisted tresses,
The close-drawn scarf, and under these
The flowing, flapping draperies—
My thought an outline still caresses,
Enchanting, comic, Japanese !

CROQUIS

To G. W.

THE beach was crowded. Pausing now and then,
He groped and fiddled doggedly along,
His worn face glaring on the thoughtless throng
The stony peevishness of sightless men.
He seemed scarce older than his clothes. Again,
Grotesquing thinly many an old sweet song,
So cracked his fiddle, his hand so frail and wrong,
You hardly could distinguish one in ten.
He stopped at last, and sat him on the sand,
And, grasping wearily his bread-winner,
Stared dim towards the blue immensity,
Then leaned his head upon his poor old hand.
He may have slept : he did not speak nor stir :
His gesture spoke a vast despondency.

BRIC-À-BRAC

ATTADALE, WEST HIGHLANDS

To A. J.

A BLACK and glassy float, opaque and still,
The loch, at furthest ebb supine in sleep,
Reversing, mirrored in its luminous deep
The calm gray skies ; the solemn spurs of hill ;
Heather, and corn, and wisps of loitering haze ;
The wee white cots, black-hatted, plumed with
 smoke ;
The braes beyond—and when the ripple awoke,
They wavered with the jarred and wavering glaze.
The air was hushed and dreamy. Evermore
A noise of running water whispered near.
A straggling crow called high and thin. A bird
Trilled from the birch-leaves. Round the
 shingled shore,
Yellow with weed, there wandered, vague and
 clear,
Strange vowels, mysterious gutturals, idly heard.

FROM A WINDOW IN PRINCES STREET

To M. M. M'B.

ABOVE the Craggs that fade and gloom
Starts the bare knee of Arthur's Seat ;
Ridged high against the evening bloom,
The Old Town rises, street on street ;

BRIC-À-BRAC

* With lamps bejewelled, straight ahead,
Like rampired walls the houses lean,
All spired and domed and turreted,
Sheer to the valley's darkling green ;
Ranged in mysterious disarray,
The Castle, menacing and austere,
Looms through the lingering last of day ;
And in the silver dusk you hear,
Reverberated from crag and scar,
Bold bugles blowing points of war.

IN THE DIALS

To *Garryowen* upon an organ ground
Two girls are jigging. Riotously they trip,
With eyes aflame, quick bosoms, hand on hip,
As in the tumult of a witches' round.
Youngsters and youngsters round them prance
and bound.
Two solemn babes twirl ponderously, and skip.
The artist's teeth gleam from his bearded lip.
High from the kennel howls a tortured hound.
The music reels and hurtles, and the night
Is full of stinks and cries ; a naphtha-light
Flares from a barrow ; battered and obtused
With vices, wrinkles, life and work and rags,
Each with her inch of clay, two loitering hags
Look on dispassionate—critical—something
'mused.

BRIC-À-BRAC

THE gods are dead ? Perhaps they are ! Who knows ?

Living at least in Lemprière undeleted,
The wise, the fair, the awful, the jocose,
Are one and all, I like to think, retreated
In some still land of lilacs and the rose.

Once high they sat, and high o'er earthly shows
With sacrificial dance and song were greeted.
Once . . . long ago. But now, the story goes,
The gods are dead.

It must be true. The world, a world of prose,
Full-crammed with facts, in science swathed and
sheeted,
Nods in a stertorous after-dinner doze !
Plangent and sad, in every wind that blows
Who will may hear the sorry words repeated :—
‘ The Gods are Dead ! ’

To F. W.

LET us be drunk, and for a while forget,
Forget, and, ceasing even from regret,
Live without reason and despite of rhyme,
As in a dream preposterous and sublime,
Where place and hour and means for once are
met.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Where is the use of effort ? Love and debt
And disappointment have us in a net.
Let us break out, and taste the morning
prime . . .

Let us be drunk.

In vain our little hour we strut and fret,
And mouth our wretched parts as for a bet :
We cannot please the tragicaster Time.
To gain the crystal sphere, the silver clime,
Where Sympathy sits dimpling on us yet,
Let us be drunk !

WHEN you are old, and I am passed away—
Passed, and your face, your golden face, is gray—
I think, whate'er the end, this dream of mine,
Comforting you, a friendly star will shine
Down the dim slope where still you stumble and
stray.

So may it be : that so dead Yesterday,
No sad-eyed ghost but generous and gay,
May serve you memories like almighty wine,
When you are old !

Dear Heart, it shall be so. Under the sway
Of death the past's enormous disarray
Lies hushed and dark. Yet though there come
no sign,
Live on well pleased : immortal and divine
Love shall still tend you, as God's angels may,
When you are old.

BRIC-À-BRAC

BESIDE the idle summer sea
And in the vacant summer days,
Light Love came fluting down the ways,
Where you were loitering with me.

Who has not welcomed, even as we,
That jocund minstrel and his lays
Beside the idle summer sea
And in the vacant summer days ?

We listened, we were fancy-free ;
And lo ! in terror and amaze
We stood alone—alone at gaze
With an implacable memory
Beside the idle summer sea.

I. M.

R. G. C. B.

1878

THE ways of Death are soothing and serene,
And all the words of Death are grave and sweet.
From camp and church, the fireside and the
street,
She beckons forth—and strife and song have been.

A summer night descending cool and green
And dark on daytime's dust and stress and heat,
The ways of Death are soothing and serene,
And all the words of Death are grave and sweet.

BRIC-À-BRAC

O glad and sorrowful, with triumphant mien
And radiant faces look upon, and greet
This last of all your lovers, and to meet
Her kiss, the Comforter's, your spirit lean. . . .
The ways of Death are soothing and serene.

WE shall surely die :
Must we needs grow old ?
Grow old and cold,
And we know not why ?

O, the By-and-By,
And the tale that 's told !
We shall surely die :
Must we needs grow old ?

Grow old and sigh,
Grudge and withhold,
Resent and scold ? . . .
Not you and I ?
We shall surely die !

WHAT is to come we know not. But we know
That what has been was good—was good to show,
Better to hide, and best of all to bear.
We are the masters of the days that were :
We have lived, we have loved, we have suffered
. . . even so.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Shall we not take the ebb who had the flow ?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us !—need we
care

What is to come ?

Let the great winds their worst and wildest blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow slow :
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow

What is to come.

ECHOES

1872-1889

Aquí está encerrada el alma del licenciado Pedro García.

GIL BLAS AU LECTEUR.

I

TO MY MOTHER

CHIMING a dream by the way
With ocean's rapture and roar,
I met a maiden to-day
Walking alone on the shore :
Walking in maiden wise,
Modest and kind and fair,
The freshness of spring in her eyes
And the fulness of spring in her hair.

Cloud-shadow and scudding sun-burst
Were swift on the floor of the sea,
And a mad wind was romping its worst,
But what was their magic to me ?
Or the charm of the midsummer skies ?
I only saw she was there,
A dream of the sea in her eyes
And the kiss of the sea in her hair.

I watched her vanish in space ;
She came where I walked no more ;
But something had passed of her grace
To the spell of the wave and the shore ;

ECHOES

And now, as the glad stars rise,
She comes to me, rosy and rare,
The delight of the wind in her eyes
And the hand of the wind in her hair.

1872

II

LIFE is bitter. All the faces of the years,
Young and old, are gray with travail and with
tears.

Must we only wake to toil, to tire, to weep ?
In the sun, among the leaves, upon the flowers,
Slumber stills to dreamy death the heavy hours . . .
Let me sleep.

Riches won but mock the old, unable years ;
Fame 's a pearl that hides beneath a sea of tears ;
Love must wither, or must live alone and weep.
In the sunshine, through the leaves, across the
flowers,
While we slumber, death approaches through the
hours . . .
Let me sleep.

1872

III

O, GATHER me the rose, the rose,
While yet in flower we find it,
For summer smiles, but summer goes,
And winter waits behind it !

ECHOES

For with the dream foregone, foregone,
The deed forborne for ever,
The worm, regret, will canker on,
And Time will turn him never.

So well it were to love, my love,
And cheat of any laughter
The fate beneath us and above,
The dark before and after.

The myrtle and the rose, the rose,
The sunshine and the swallow,
The dream that comes, the wish that goes,
The memories that follow !

1874

IV

I. M.

R. T. HAMILTON BRUCE .

(1846-1899)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

ECHOES

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate :
I am the captain of my soul.

1875

v

I AM the Reaper.
All things with heedful hook
Silent I gather.
Pale roses touched with the spring,
Tall corn in summer,
Fruits rich with autumn, and frail winter
blossoms—
Reaping, still reaping—
All things with heedful hook
Timely I gather.

I am the Sower.
All the unbodied life
Runs through my seed-sheet.
Atom with atom wed,
Each quickening the other,
Fall through my hands, ever changing,
still changeless.
Ceaselessly sowing,
Life, incorruptible life,
Flows from my seed-sheet.

ECHOES

Maker and breaker,
I am the ebb and the flood,
Here and Hereafter.
Sped through the tangle and coil
Of infinite nature,
Viewless and soundless I fashion all being.
Taker and giver,
I am the womb and the grave,
The Now and the Ever.

1875

VI

PRAISE the generous gods for giving
In a world of wrath and strife,
With a little time for living,
Unto all the joy of life.

At whatever source we drink it,
Art or love or faith or wine,
In whatever terms we think it,
It is common and divine.

Praise the high gods, for in giving
This to man, and this alone,
They have made his chance of living
Shine the equal of their own.

1875

VII

FILL a glass with golden wine,
And the while your lips are wet
Set their perfume unto mine,
And forget,

ECHOES

Every kiss we take and give
Leaves us less of life to live.

Yet again ! Your whim and mine
In a happy while have met.
All your sweets to me resign,
Nor regret
That we press with every breath,
Sighed or singing, nearer death.

1875

VIII

WE 'LL go no more a-roving by the light of the
moon.
November glooms are barren beside the dusk of
June.
The summer flowers are faded, the summer
thoughts are sere.
We 'll go no more a-roving, lest worse befall,
my dear.

We 'll go no more a-roving by the light of the
moon.
The song we sang rings hollow, and heavy runs
the tune.
Glad ways and words remembered would shame
the wretched year.
We 'll go no more a-roving, nor dream we did,
my dear.

ECHOES

We 'll go no more a-roving by the light of the
moon.

If yet we walk together, we need not shun the
moon.

No sweet thing left to savour, no sad thing left
to fear,

We 'll go no more a-roving, but weep at home,
my dear.

1875

IX

To W. R.

MADAM LIFE 's a piece in bloom

Death goes dogging everywhere :

She 's the tenant of the room,

He 's the ruffian on the stair.

You shall see her as a friend,

You shall bilk him once and twice ;

But he 'll trap you in the end,

And he 'll stick you for her price.

With his kneebones at your chest,

And his knuckles in your throat,

You would reason—plead—protest !

Clutching at her petticoat ;

But she 's heard it all before,

Well she knows you 've had your fun,

Gingerly she gains the door,

And your little job is done.

1877

ECHOES

X

THE sea is full of wandering foam,
The sky of driving cloud ;
My restless thoughts among them roam . . .
The night is dark and loud.

Where are the hours that came to me
So beautiful and bright ?
A wild wind shakes the wilder sea . . .
O, dark and loud 's the night !

1876

XI

To W. R.

THICK is the darkness—
Sunward, O, sunward !
Rough is the highway—
Onward, still onward !

Dawn harbours surely
East of the shadows.
Facing us somewhere
Spread the sweet meadows.

Upward and forward !
Time will restore us,
Light is above us,
Rest is before us.

1876

ECHOES

XII

To me at my fifth-floor window
The chimney-pots in rows
Are sets of pipes pandean
For every wind that blows ;
And the smoke that whirls and eddies
In a thousand times and keys
Is really a visible music
Set to my reveries.
O monstrous pipes, melodious
With fitful tune and dream,
The clouds are your only audience,
Her thought is your only theme !

1875

XIII

BRING her again, O western wind,
Over the western sea :
Gentle and good and fair and kind,
Bring her again to me !
Not that her fancy holds me dear,
Not that a hope may be :
Only that I may know her near,
Wind of the western sea.

1875

ECHOES

XIV

THE wan sun westers, faint and slow ;
The eastern distance glimmers gray ;
An eerie haze comes creeping low
Across the little, lonely bay ;
And from the sky-line far away
About the quiet heaven are spread
Mysterious hints of dying day,
Thin, delicate dreams of green and red.

And weak, reluctant surges lap
And rustle round and down the strand.
No other sound . . . If it should hap,
The ship that sails from fairy-land !
The silken shrouds with spells are manned,
The hull is magically scrolled,
The squat mast lives, and in the sand
The gold prow-griffin claws a hold.

It steals to seaward silently ;
Strange fish-folk follow thro' the gloom ;
Great wings flap overhead ; I see
The Castle of the Drowsy Doom
Vague thro' the changeless twilight loom,
Enchanted, hushed. And ever there
She slumbers in eternal bloom,
Her cushions hid with golden hair.

1875

ECHOES

xv

THERE is a wheel inside my head
Of wantonness and wine,
An old, cracked fiddle is begging without,
But the wind with scents of the sea is fed,
And the sun seems glad to shine.

The sun and the wind are akin to you,
As you are akin to June.
But the fiddle ! . . . It giggles and twitters
about,
And, love and laughter ! who gave him the
cue ?—
He 's playing your favourite tune.

1875

xvi

WHILE the west is paling
Starshine is begun.
While the dusk is failing
Glimmers up the sun.

So, till darkness cover
Life's retreating gleam,
Lover follows lover,
Dream succeeds to dream.

Stoop to my endeavour,
O my love, and be
Only and for ever
Sun and stars to me.

1876

ECHOES

XVII

THE sands are alive with sunshine,
The bathers lounge and throng,
And out in the bay a bugle
Is lilting a gallant song.

The clouds go racing eastward,
The blithe wind cannot rest,
And a shard on the shingle flashes
Like the shining soul of a jest ;

While children romp in the surges,
And sweethearts wander free,
And the Firth as with laughter dimples . . .
I would it were deep over me !

1875

XVIII

To A. D.

THE nightingale has a lyre of gold,
The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
Our hearts and lips together.

1876

ECHOES

XIX

YOUR heart has trembled to my tongue,
Your hands in mine have lain,
Your thought to me has leaned and clung,
 Again and yet again,
 My dear,
 Again and yet again.

Now die the dream, or come the wife,
The past is not in vain,
For wholly as it was your life
 Can never be again,
 My dear,
 Can never be again.

1876

XX

THE surges gushed and sounded,
The blue was the blue of June,
And low above the brightening east
 Floated a shred of moon.

The woods were black and solemn,
The night winds large and free,
And in your thought a blessing seemed
 To fall on land and sea.

1877

ECHOES

XXI

WE flash across the level.
We thunder thro' the bridges.
We bicker down the cuttings.
We sway along the ridges.

A rush of streaming hedges,
Of jostling lights and shadows,
Of hurtling, hurrying stations,
Or racing woods and meadows.

We charge the tunnels headlong—
The blackness roars and shatters.
We crash between embankments—
The open spins and scatters.

We shake off the miles like water,
We might carry a royal ransom ;
And I think of her waiting, waiting,
And long for a common hansom.

1876

XXII

THE West a glimmering lake of light,
A dream of pearly weather,
The first of stars is burning white—
The star we watch together.
Is April dead ? The unresting year
Will shape us our September,
And April's work is done, my dear—
Do you not remember ?

ECHOES

O gracious eve ! O happy star,
Still-flashing, glowing, sinking !—
Who lives of lovers near or far
So glad as I in thinking ?
The gallant world is warm and green,
For May fulfils November.
When lights and leaves and loves have
been,
Sweet, will you remember ?

O star benignant and serene,
I take the good to-morrow,
That fills from verge to verge my dream,
With all its joy and sorrow !
The old, sweet spell is unforgot
That turns to June December ;
And, tho' the world remembered not,
Love, we would remember.

1876

XXIII

THE skies are strown with stars,
The streets are fresh with dew,
A thin moon drifts to westward,
The night is hushed and cheerful :
My thought is quick with you.

Near windows gleam and laugh,
And far away a train
Clanks glowing through the stillness :
A great content 's in all things,
And life is not in vain.

1877

ECHOES

XXIV

THE full sea rolls and thunders
In glory and in glee.
O, bury me not in the senseless earth
But in the living sea !

Ay, bury me where it surges
A thousand miles from shore,
And in its brotherly unrest
I 'll range for evermore.

1876

XXV

IN the year that 's come and gone, love, his
flying feather
Stooping slowly, gave us heart, and bade us walk
together.
In the year that 's coming on, though many a
troth be broken,
We at least will not forget aught that love hath
spoken.

In the year that 's come and gone, dear, we wove
a tether
All of gracious words and thoughts, binding two
together.
In the year that 's coming on with its wealth of
roses
We shall weave it stronger yet, ere the circle
closes.

ECHOES

In the year that 's come and gone, in the golden
weather,
Sweet, my sweet, we swore to keep the watch
of life together.
In the year that 's coming on, rich in joy and
sorrow,
We shall light our lamp, and wait life's mysterious
morrow.

1877

XXVI

In the placid summer midnight,
Under the drowsy sky,
I seem to hear in the stillness
The moths go glimmering by.

One by one from the windows
The lights have all been sped.
Never a blind looks conscious—
The street is asleep in bed !

But I come where a living casement
Laughs luminous and wide ;
I hear the song of a piano
Break in a sparkling tide ;

And I feel, in the waltz that frolics
And warbles swift and clear,
A sudden sense of shelter
And friendliness and cheer . . .

ECHOES

A sense of tinkling glasses,
Of love and laughter and light—
The piano stops, and the window
Stares blank out into the night.

The blind goes out, and I wander
To the old, unfriendly sea,
The lonelier for the memory
That walks like a ghost with me.

XXVII

SHE sauntered by the swinging seas,
A jewel glittered at her ear,
And, teasing her along, the breeze
Brought many a rounded grace more near
So passing, one with wave and beam,
She left for memory to caress
A laughing thought, a golden gleam,
A hint of hidden loveliness.

1876

XXVIII

To S. C.

BLITHE dreams arise to greet us,
And life feels clean and new,
For the old love comes to meet us
In the dawning and the dew.

ECHOES

O'erblown with sunny shadows,
O'ersped with winds at play,
The woodlands and the meadows
Are keeping holiday.
Wild foals are scampering, neighing,
Brave merles their hautboys blow:
Come ! let us go a-maying
As in the Long-Ago.

Here we but peak and dwindle:
The clank of chain and crane,
The whir of crank and spindle
Bewilder heart and brain;
The ends of our endeavour
Are merely wealth and fame,
Yet in the still Forever
We 're one and all the same;
Delaying, still delaying,
We watch the fading west:
Come ! let us go a-maying,
Nor fear to take the best.

Yet beautiful and spacious
The wise, old world appears.
Yet frank and fair and gracious
Outlaugh the jocund years.
Our arguments disputing,
The universal Pan
Still wanders fluting—fluting—
Fluting to maid and man.
Our weary well-a-waying
His music cannot still:
Come ! let us go a-maying,
And pipe with him our fill.

ECHOES

Where wanton winds are flowing
Among the gladdening grass;
Where hawthorn brakes are blowing,
And meadow perfumes pass;
Where morning's grace is greenest,
And fullest noon's of pride;
Where sunset spreads serenest,
And sacred night's most wide;
Where nests are swaying, swaying,
And spring's fresh voices call,
Come ! let us go a-maying,
And bless the God of all !

1878

XXIX

To R. L. S.

A CHILD,
Curious and innocent,
Slips from his Nurse, and rejoicing
Loses himself in the Fair.

Thro' the jostle and din
Wandering, he revels,
Dreaming, desiring, possessing ;
Till, of a sudden
Tired and afraid, he beholds
The sordid assemblage
Just as it is ; and he runs
With a sob to his Nurse
(Lighting at last on him),
And in her motherly bosom
Cries him to sleep.

ECHOES

Thus thro' the World,
Seeing and feeling and knowing,
Goes Man : till at last,
Tired of experience, he turns
To the friendly and comforting breast
Of the old nurse, Death.

1876

xxx

KATE-A-WHIMSIES, John-a-Dreams,
Still debating, still delay,
And the world's a ghost that gleams—
Wavers—vanishes away !

We must live while live we can ;
We should love while love we may.
Dread in women, doubt in man . . .
So the Infinite runs away.

1876

xxxI

O, HAVE you blessed, behind the stars,
The blue sheen in the skies,
When June the roses round her calls ?—
Then do you know the light that falls
From her belovèd eyes.

And have you felt the sense of peace
That morning meadows give ?—
Then do you know the spirit of grace,
The angel abiding in her face,
Who makes it good to live.

ECHOES

She shines before me, hope and dream,
So fair, so still, so wise,
That, winning her, I seem to win
Out of the dust and drive and din
A nook of Paradise.

1877

XXXII

To D. H.

O, FALMOUTH is a fine town with ships in the bay,
And I wish from my heart it's there I was
to-day ;
I wish from my heart I was far away from here,
Sitting in my parlour and talking to my dear.
For it's home, dearie, home—it's home I
want to be.
Our topsails are hoisted, and we'll away to
sea.
O, the oak and the ash and the bonnie
birken tree
They're all growing green in the old
countrie.

In Baltimore a-walking a lady I did meet
With her babe on her arm, as she came down
the street ;
And I thought how I sailed, and the cradle stand-
ing ready
For the pretty little babe that has never seen its
daddie.
And it's home, dearie, home . . .

ECHOES

O, if it be a lass, she shall wear a golden ring ;
And if it be a lad, he shall fight for his king :
With his dirk and his hat and his little jacket blue
He shall walk the quarter-deck as his daddie
used to do.

And it 's home, dearie, home . . .

O, there 's a wind a-blowing, a-blowing from the
west,
And that of all the winds is the one I like the
best,
For it blows at our backs, and it shakes our
pennon free,
And it soon will blow us home to the old countrie.
For it 's home, dearie, home—it 's home I
want to be.
Our topsails are hoisted, and we 'll away
to sea.
O, the oak and the ash and the bonnie birken
tree
They 're all growing green in the old
countrie.

1878

NOTE.—The burthen and the third stanza are old.

XXXIII

THE ways are green with the gladdening sheen
Of the young year's fairest daughter.
O, the shadows that fleet o'er the springing wheat !
O, the magic of running water !

ECHOES

The spirit of spring is in every thing,
The banners of spring are streaming,
We march to a tune from the fifes of June,
And life 's a dream worth dreaming.

It 's all very well to sit and spell
At the lesson there 's no gainsaying ;
But what the deuce are wont and use
When the whole mad world 's a-maying ?
When the meadow glows, and the orchard snows,
And the air 's with love-notes teeming,
When fancies break, and the senses wake,
O, life 's a dream worth dreaming !

What Nature has writ with her lusty wit
Is worded so wisely and kindly
That whoever has dipped in her manuscript
Must up and follow her blindly.
Now the summer prime is her blithest rhyme
In the being and the seeming,
And they that have heard the overword
Know life 's a dream worth dreaming.

1878

XXXIV

To K. DE M.

*Love blows as the wind blows,
Love blows into the heart.*—NILE BOAT-SONG.

LIFE in her creaking shoes
Goes, and more formal grows,
A round of calls and cues :
Love blows as the wind blows.

ECHOES

Blows ! . . . in the quiet close
As in the roaring mart,
By ways no mortal knows
Love blows into the heart.

The stars some cadence use,
Forthright the river flows,
In order fall the dews,
Love blows as the wind blows :
Blows ! . . . and what reckoning shows
The courses of his chart ?
A spirit that comes and goes,
Love blows into the heart.

1878

xxxv

I. M.

MARGARITÆ SORORIS

(1886)

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies ;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, gray city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,

ECHOES

Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing !
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

1876

XXXVI

I GAVE my heart to a woman—
I gave it her, branch and root.
She bruised, she wrung, she tortured,
She cast it under foot.

Under her feet she cast it,
She trampled it where it fell,
She broke it all to pieces,
And each was a clot of hell.

There in the rain and the sunshine
They lay and smouldered long ;
And each, when again she viewed them,
Had turned to a living song.

ECHOES

XXXVII

To W. A.

OR ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
I bent and broke your pride.
You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone
Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King in Babylon
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
The deed beyond the grave,
When I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Virgin Slave.

ECHOES

XXXVIII

On the way to Kew,
By the river old and gray,
Where in the Long Ago
We laughed and loitered so,
I met a ghost to-day,
A ghost that told of you—
A ghost of low replies
And sweet, inscrutable eyes
Coming up from Richmond
As you used to do.

By the river old and gray,
The enchanted Long Ago
Murmured and smiled anew.
On the way to Kew,
March had the laugh of May,
The bare boughs looked aglow,
And old, immortal words
Sang in my breast like birds,
Coming up from Richmond
As I used with you.

With the life of Long Ago
Lived my thought of you.
By the river old and gray
Flowing his appointed way
As I watched I knew
What is so good to know—
Not in vain, not in vain,
Shall I look for you again
Coming up from Richmond
On the way to Kew.

ECHOES

XXXIX

THE Past was goodly once, and yet, when all is
said,
The best of it we know is that it's done and
dead.

Dwindled and faded quite, perished beyond recall,
Nothing is left at last of what one time was all.

Coming back like a ghost, staring and linger-
ing on,
Never a word it speaks but proves it dead and
gone.

Duty and work and joy—these things it cannot
give ;
And the Present is life, and life is good to live.

Let it lie where it fell, far from the living sun,
The Past that, goodly once, is gone and dead and
done.

XL

THE spring, my dear,
Is no longer spring.
Does the blackbird sing
What he sang last year ?
Are the skies the old
Immemorial blue ?
Or am I, or are you,
Grown cold ?

ECHOES

Though life be change,
It is hard to bear
When the old sweet air
Sounds forced and strange.
To be out of tune,
Plain You and I . . .
It were better to die,
And soon !

XLI

To R. A. M. S.

*The Spirit of Wine
Sang in my glass, and I listened
With love to his odorous music,
His flushed and magnificent song.*

—— ‘ I am health, I am heart, I am life !
For I give for the asking
The fire of my father, the Sun,
And the strength of my mother, the Earth.
Inspiration in essence,
I am wisdom and wit to the wise,
His visible muse to the poet,
The soul of desire to the lover,
The genius of laughter to all.

‘ Come, lean on me, ye that are weary !
Rise, ye faint-hearted and doubting !
Haste, ye that lag by the way !
I am Pride, the consoler ;
Valour and Hope are my henchmen ;
I am the Angel of Rest.

ECHOES

' I am life, I am wealth, I am fame :
For I captain an army
Of shining and generous dreams ;
And mine, too, all mine, are the keys
Of that secret spiritual shrine,
Where, his work-a-day soul put by,
Shut in with his saint of saints—
With his radiant and conquering self—
Man worships, and talks, and is glad.

' Come, sit with me, ye that are lonely,
Ye that are paid with disdain,
Ye that are chained and would soar !
I am beauty and love ;
I am friendship, the comforter ;
I am that which forgives and forgets.'——

The Spirit of Wine
Sang in my heart, and I triumphed
In the savour and scent of his music,
His magnetic and mastering song.

XLII

A WINK from Hesper, falling
Fast in the wintry sky,
Comes through the even blue,
Dear, like a word from you . . .
Is it good-bye ?

Across the miles between us
I send you sigh for sigh.
Good-night, sweet friend, good-night :
Till life and all take flight,
Never good-bye.

ECHOES

XLIII

FRIENDS . . old friends . . .
One sees how it ends.
A woman looks
Or a man tells lies,
And the pleasant brooks
And the quiet skies,
Ruined with brawling
And caterwauling,
Enchant no more
As they did before.
And so it ends
With friends.

Friends . . old friends . . .
And what if it ends ?
Shall we dare to shirk
What we live to learn ?
It has done its work,
It has served its turn ;
And, forgive and forget
Or hanker and fret,
We can be no more
As we were before.
When it ends, it ends
With friends.

Friends . . old friends . . .
So it breaks, so it ends.
There let it rest !
It has fought and won,
And is still the best

ECHOES

That either has done.
Each as he stands
The work of its hands,
Which shall be more
As he was before ? . . .
What is it ends
With friends ?

XLIV

If it should come to be,
This proof of you and me,
 This type and sign
Of hours that smiled and shone,
And yet seemed dead and gone
 As old-world wine :

Of Them Within the Gate
Ask we no richer fate,
 No boon above,
For girl child or for boy,
My gift of life and joy,
 Your gift of love.

XLV

To W. B. B.

FROM the brake the Nightingale
Sings exulting to the Rose ;
Though he sees her waxing pale
In her passionate repose,

ECHOES

While she triumphs waxing frail,
Fading even while she glows ;
Though he knows
How it goes—
Knows of last year's Nightingale
Dead with last year's Rose.

Wise the enamoured Nightingale,
Wise the well-belovèd Rose !
Love and life shall still prevail,
Nor the silence at the close
Break the magic of the tale
In the telling, though it shows—
Who but knows
How it goes !—
Life a last year's Nightingale,
Love a last year's Rose.

XLVI

MATRI DILECTISSIMÆ

I. M.

IN the waste hour
Between to-day and yesterday
We watched, while on my arm—
Living flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone—
Dabbled in sweat the sacred head
Lay uncomplaining, still, contemptuous, strange :
Till the dear face turned dead,
And to a sound of lamentation
The good, heroic soul with all its wealth—

ECHOES

Its sixty years of love and sacrifice,
Suffering and passionate faith—was reabsorbed
In the inexorable Peace,
And life was changed to us for evermore.

Was nothing left of her but tears
Like blood-drops from the heart ?
Nought save remorse
For duty unfulfilled, justice undone,
And charity ignored ? Nothing but love,
Forgiveness, reconciliation, where in truth,
But for this passing
Into the unimaginable abyss
These things had never been ?

Nay, there were we,
Her five strong sons !
To her Death came—the great Deliverer came !—
As equal comes to equal, throne to throne.
She was a mother of men.

The stars shine as of old. The unchanging
River,
Bent on his errand of immortal law,
Works his appointed way
To the immemorial sea.
And the brave truth comes overwhelmingly
home :—
That she in us yet works and shines,
Lives and fulfils herself,
Unending as the river and the stars.

Dearest, live on
In such an immortality

ECHOES

As we thy sons,
Born of thy body and nursed
At those wild, faithful breasts,
Can give—of generous thoughts,
And honourable words, and deeds
That make men half in love with fate !
Live on, O brave and true,
In us thy children, in ours whose life is thine—
Our best and theirs ! What is that best but
thee—
Thee, and thy gift to us, to pass
Like light along the infinite of space
To the immitigable end ?

Between the river and the stars,
O royal and radiant soul,
Thou dost return, thine influences return
Upon thy children as in life, and death
Turns stingless ! What is Death
But Life in act ? How should the Unteeming
Grave
Be victor over thee,
Mother, a mother of men ?

XLVII

CROSSES and troubles a-many have proved me.
One or two women (God bless them !) have
loved me.
I have worked and dreamed, and I've talked at
will.
Of art and drink I have had my fill.

ECHOES

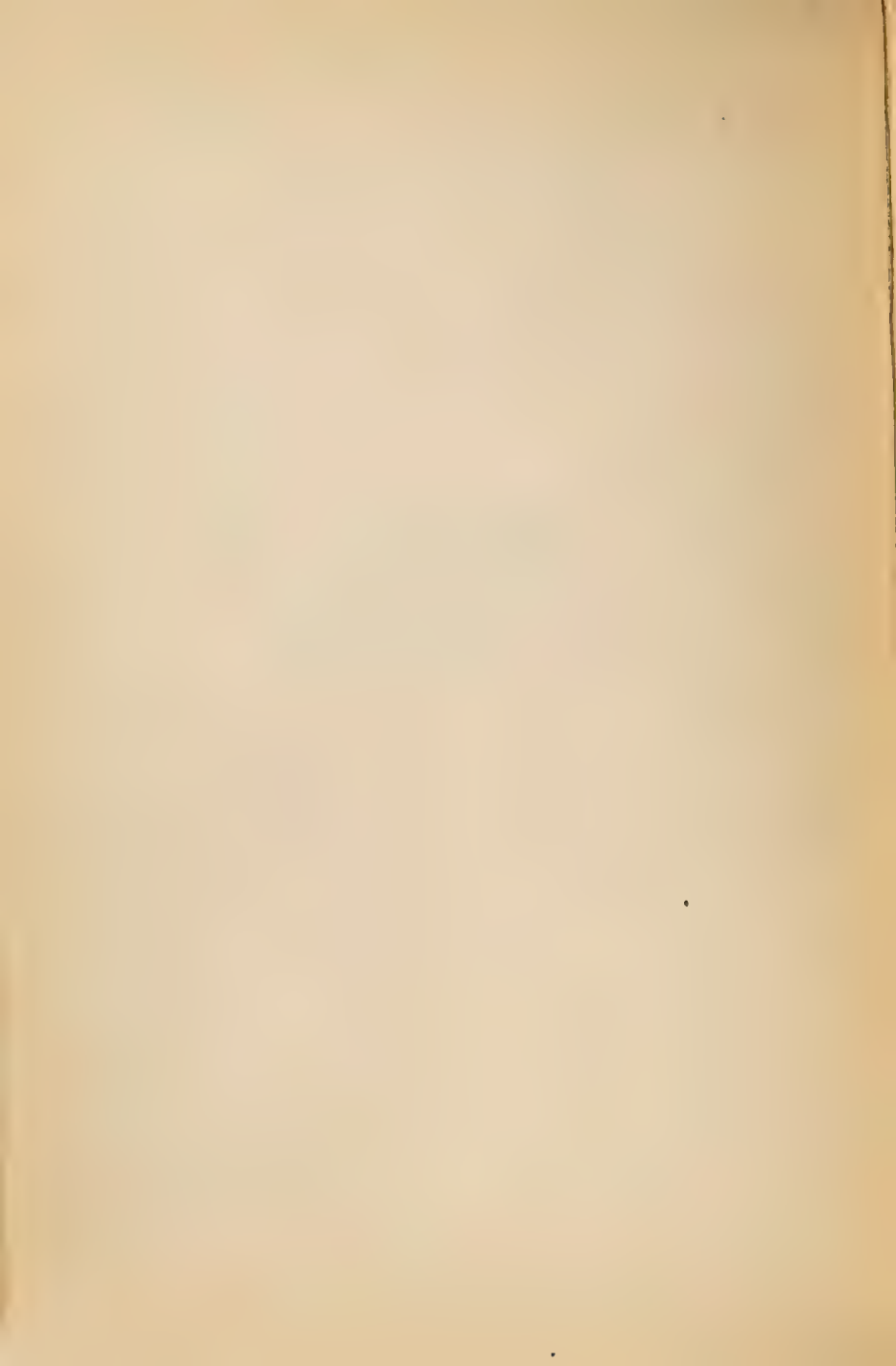
I 've comforted here, and I 've succoured there.
I 've faced my foes, and I 've backed my friends.
I 've blundered, and sometimes made amends.
I have prayed for light, and I 've known despair.
Now I look before, as I look behind,
Come storm, come shine, whatever befall,
With a grateful heart and a constant mind,
For the end I know is the best of all.

1888-1889



RHYMES
AND RHYTHMS

1889-1892



PROLOGUE

Something is dead . . .

*The grace of sunset solitudes, the march
Of the solitary moon, the pomp and power
Of round on round of shining soldier-stars
Patrolling space, the bounties of the sun—
Sovran, tremendous, unimaginable—
The multitudinous friendliness of the sea,
Possess no more—no more.*

Something is dead . . .

*The Autumn rain-rot deeper and wider soaks
And spreads, the burden of Winter heavier weighs,
His melancholy close and closer yet
Cleaves, and those incantations of the Spring
That made the heart a centre of miracles
Grow formal, and the wonder-working hours
Arise no more—no more.*

Something is dead . . .

*'Tis time to creep in close about the fire
And tell gray tales of what we were, and dream
Old dreams and faded, and as we may rejoice
In the young life that round us leaps and laughs,
A fountain in the sunshine, in the pride
Of God's best gift that to us twain returns,
Dear Heart, no more—no more.*

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS ,

I

To H. B. M. W.

WHERE forlorn sunsets flare and fade
On desolate sea and lonely sand,
Out of the silence and the shade
What is the voice of strange command
Calling you still, as friend calls friend
With love that cannot brook delay,
To rise and follow the ways that wend
Over the hills and far away ?

Hark in the city, street on street
A roaring reach of death and life,
Of vortices that clash and fleet
And ruin in appointed strife,
Hark to it calling, calling clear,
Calling until you cannot stay
From dearer things than your own most dear
Over the hills and far away.

Out of the sound of the ebb-and-flow,
Out of the sight of lamp and star,
It calls you where the good winds blow,
And the unchanging meadows are :
From faded hopes and hopes agleam,
It calls you, calls you night and day
Beyond the dark into the dream
Over the hills and far away.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

II

To R. F. B.

WE are the Choice of the Will : God, when
He gave the word
That called us into line, set in our hand a sword ;

Set us a sword to wield none else could lift and
draw,
And bade us forth to the sound of the trumpet
of the Law.

East and west and north, wherever the battle
grew,
As men to a feast we fared, the work of the Will
to do.

Bent upon vast beginnings, bidding anarchy
cease—
(Had we hacked it to the Pit, we had left it a
place of peace !)—

Marching, building, sailing, pillar of cloud or
fire,
Sons of the Will, we fought the fight of the Will,
our sire.

Road was never so rough that we left its purpose
dark ;
Stark was ever the sea, but our ships were yet
more stark ;

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

We tracked the winds of the world to the steps
of their very thrones ;
The secret parts of the world were salted with
our bones ;

Till now the name of names, England, the name
of might,
Flames from the austral fires to the bounds of
the boreal night ;

And the call of her morning drum goes in a girdle
of sound,
Like the voice of the sun in song, the great globe
round and round ;

And the shadow of her flag, when it shouts to
the mother-breeze,
Floats from shore to shore of the universal
seas ;

And the loneliest death is fair with a memory of
her flowers,
And the end of the road to Hell with the sense
of her dews and showers !

Who says that we shall pass, or the fame of us
fade and die,
While the living stars fulfil their round in the
living sky ?

For the sire lives in his sons, and they pay their
father's debt,
And the Lion has left a whelp wherever his claw
was set ;

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

And the Lion in his whelps, his whelps that none
shall brave,
Is but less strong than Time and the great, all-
whelming Grave.

III

A DESOLATE shore,
The sinister seduction of the Moon,
The menace of the irreclaimable Sea.

Flaunting, tawdry and grim,
From cloud to cloud along her beat,
Leering her battered and inveterate leer,
She signals where he prowls in the dark alone,
Her horrible old man,
Mumbling old oaths and warming
His villainous old bones with villainous talk—
The secrets of their grisly housekeeping
Since they went out upon the pad
In the first twilight of self-conscious Time :
Growling, hideous and hoarse,
Tales of unnumbered Ships,
Goodly and strong, Companions of the Advance,
In some vile alley of the night
Waylaid and bludgeoned—
Dead.

Deep cellared in primeval ooze,
Ruined, dishonoured, spoiled,
They lie where the lean water-worm
Crawls free of their secrets, and their broken sides

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Bulge with the slime of life. Thus they abide,
Thus fouled and desecrate,
The summons of the Trumpet, and the while
These Twain, their murderers,
Unravined, imperturbable, unsubdued,
Hang at the heels of their children—She aloft
As in the shining streets,
He as in ambush at some accomplice door.

The stalwart Ships,
The beautiful and bold adventurers !
Stationed out yonder in the isle,
The tall Policeman,
Flashing his bull's-eye, as he peers
About him in the ancient vacancy,
Tells them this way is safety—this way home.

IV

It came with the threat of a waning moon
And the wail of an ebbing tide,
But many a woman has lived for less,
And many a man has died ;
For life upon life took hold and passed,
Strong in a fate set free,
Out of the deep into the dark
On for the years to be.

Between the gleam of a waning moon
And the song of an ebbing tide,
Chance upon chance of love and death
Took wing for the world so wide.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

O, leaf out of leaf is the way of the land,
Wave out of wave of the sea,
And who shall reckon what lives may live
In the life that we bade to be ?

V

WHY, my heart, do we love her so ?
(Geraldine, Geraldine !)
Why does the great sea ebb and flow ?—
Why does the round world spin ?
Geraldine, Geraldine,
Bid me my life renew :
What is it worth unless I win,
Love—love and you ?

Why, my heart, when we speak her name
(Geraldine, Geraldine !)
Throbs the word like a flinging flame ?—
Why does the Spring begin ?
Geraldine, Geraldine,
Bid me indeed to be :
Open your heart, and take us in,
Love—love and me.

VI

ONE with the ruined sunset,
The strange forsaken sands,
What is it waits, and wanders,
And signs with desperate hands ?

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

What is it calls in the twilight—
Calls as its chance were vain ?
The cry of a gull sent seaward
Or the voice of an ancient pain ?

The red ghost of the sunset,
It walks them as its own,
These dreary and desolate reaches . . .
But O, that it walked alone !

VII

THERE 's a regret
So grinding, so immitigably sad,
Remorse thereby feels tolerant, even glad. . . .
Do you not know it yet ?

For deeds undone
Rankle and snarl and hunger for their due,
Till there seems naught so despicable as you
In all the grin o' the sun.

Like an old shoe
The sea spurns and the land abhors, you lie
About the beach of Time, till by and by
Death, that derides you too—

Death, as he goes
His ragman's round, espies you, where you stray,
With half-an-eye, and kicks you out of his way ;
And then—and then, who knows

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

But the kind Grave
Turns on you, and you feel the convict Worm,
In that black bridewell working out his term,
Hanker and grope and crave ?

‘ Poor fool that might—
That might, yet would not, dared not, let this be,
Think of it, here and thus made over to me
In the implacable night ! ’

And writhing, fain
And like a triumphing lover, he shall take
His fill where no high memory lives to make
His obscene victory vain.

VIII

To A. J. H.

TIME and the Earth—
The old Father and Mother—
Their teeming accomplished,
Their purpose fulfilled,
Close with a smile
For a moment of kindness,
Ere for the winter
They settle to sleep.

Failing yet gracious,
Slow pacing, soon homing,
A patriarch that strolls
Through the tents of his children,
The Sun, as he journeys

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

His round on the lower
Ascents of the blue,
Washes the roofs
And the hillsides with clarity ;
Charms the dark pools
Till they break into pictures ;
Scatters magnificent
Alms to the beggar trees ;
Touches the mist-folk,
That crowd to his escort,
Into translucencies
Radiant and ravishing :
As with the visible
Spirit of Summer
Gloriously vaporised,
Visioned in gold !

Love, though the fallen leaf
Mark, and the fleeting light
And the loud, loitering
Footfall of darkness
Sign to the heart
Of the passage of destiny,
Here is the ghost
Of a summer that lived for us,
Here is a promise
Of summers to be.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

IX

- ' As like the Woman as you can '—
 (Thus the New Adam was beguiled)—
' So shall you touch the Perfect Man '—
 (God in the Garden heard and smiled).
' Your father perished with his day :
 ' A clot of passions fierce and blind,
' He fought, he hacked, he crushed his way :
 ' Your muscles, Child, must be of mind.
- ' The Brute that lurks and irks within,
 ' How, till you have him gagged and bound,
' Escape the foulest form of Sin ? '—
 (God in the Garden laughed and frowned).
' So vile, so rank, the bestial mood
 ' In which the race is bid to be,
' It wrecks the Rarer Womanhood :
 ' Live, therefore, you, for Purity !
- ' Take for your mate no gallant croup,
 ' No girl all grace and natural will :
' To work her mission were to stoop,
 ' Maybe to lapse, from Well to Ill.
' Choose one of whom your grosser make '—
 (God in the Garden laughed outright)—
' The true refining touch may take,
 ' Till both attain to Life's last height.
- ' There, equal, purged of soul and sense,
 ' Beneficent, high-thinking, just,
' Beyond the appeal of Violence,
 ' Incapable of common Lust,

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

‘ In mental Marriage still prevail ’—
 (*God in the Garden hid His face*)—
‘ Till you achieve that Female-Male
 ‘ In Which shall culminate the race.’

x

MIDSUMMER midnight skies,
Midsummer midnight influences and airs,
The shining, sensitive silver of the sea
Touched with the strange-hued blazonings of
 dawn ;
And all so solemnly still I seem to hear
The breathing of Life and Death,
The secular Accomplices,
Renewing the visible miracle of the world.

The wistful stars
Shine like good memories. The young morning
 wind
Blows full of unforgotten hours
As over a region of roses. Life and Death
Sound on—sound on. . . . And the night magical,
Troubled yet comforting, thrills
As if the Enchanted Castle at the heart
Of the wood’s dark wonderment
Swung wide his valves, and filled the dim sea-
 banks
With exquisite visitants :
Words fiery-hearted yet, dreams and desires
With living looks intolerable, regrets

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Whose voice comes as the voice of an only child
Heard from the grave : shapes of a Might-
Have-Been—

Beautiful, miserable, distraught—
The Law no man may baffle denied and slew.

The spell-bound ships stand as at gaze
To let the marvel by. The gray road glooms . . .
Glimmers . . . goes out . . . and there, O, there
where it fades,

What grace, what glamour, what wild will,
Transfigure the shadows ? Whose,
Heart of my heart, Soul of my soul, but yours ?
Ghosts—ghosts—the sapphirine air
Teems with them even to the gleaming ends
Of the wild day-spring ! Ghosts,
Everywhere—everywhere—till I and you
At last—dear love, at last !—
Are in the dreaming, even as Life and Death,
Twin-ministers of the unoriginal Will.

XI

GULLS in an æry morrice
Gleam and vanish and gleam . . .
The full sea, sleepily basking,
Dreams under skies of dream.

Gulls in an æry morrice
Circle and swoop and close . . .
Fuller and ever fuller
The rose of the morning blows.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Gulls, in an æry morrice
Frolicking, float and fade . . .
O, the way of a bird in the sunshine,
The way of a man with a maid !

XII

SOME starlit garden gray with dew,
Some chamber flushed with wine and fire,
What matters where, so I and you
Are worthy our desire ?

Behind, a past that scolds and jeers
For ungirt loins and lamps unlit ;
In front, the unmanageable years,
The trap upon the Pit ;

Think on the shame of dreams for deeds,
The scandal of unnatural strife,
The slur upon immortal needs,
The treason done to life :

Arise ! no more a living lie,
And with me quicken and control
Some memory that shall magnify
The universal Soul.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

XIII

To JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

UNDER a stagnant sky,
Gloom out of gloom uncoiling into gloom,
The River, jaded and forlorn,
Welters and wanders wearily—wretchedly—on ;
Yet in and out among the ribs
Of the old skeleton bridge, as in the piles
Of some dead lake-built city, full of skulls,
Worm-worn, rat-riddled, mouldy with memories,
Lingers to babble to a broken tune
(Once, O, the unvoiced music of my heart !)
So melancholy a soliloquy
It sounds as it might tell
The secret of the unending grief-in-grain,
The terror of Time and Change and Death,
That wastes this floating, transitory world.
What of the incantation
That forced the huddled shapes on yonder shore
To take and wear the night
Like a material majesty ?
That touched the shafts of wavering fire
About this miserable welter and wash—
(River, O River of Journeys, River of Dreams !)—
Into long, shining signals from the panes
Of an enchanted pleasure-house,
Where life and life might live life lost in life
For ever and evermore ?

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

O Death ! O Change ! O Time !
Without you, O, the insufferable eyes
Of these poor Might-Have-Beens,
These fatuous, ineffectual Yesterdays !

XIV

To J. A. C.

FRESH from his fastnesses
Wholesome and spacious,
The North Wind, the mad huntsman,
Halloas on his white hounds
Over the gray, roaring
Reaches and ridges,
The forest of ocean,
The chace of the world.
Hark to the peal
Of the pack in full cry,
As he thongs them before him,
Swarming voluminous,
Weltering, wide-wallowing,
Till in a ruining
Chaos of energy,
Hurled on their quarry,
They crash into foam !

Old Indefatigable,
Time's right-hand man, the sea
Laughs as in joy
From his millions of wrinkles :

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Laughs that his destiny,
Great with the greatness
Of triumphing order,
Shows as a dwarf
By the strength of his heart
And the might of his hands.

Master of masters,
O maker of heroes,
Thunder the brave,
Irresistible message :—
' Life is worth Living
Through every grain of it,
From the foundations
To the last edge
Of the cornerstone, death.

xv

You played and sang a snatch of song,
A song that all-too well we knew ;
But whither had flown the ancient wrong ;
And was it really I and you ?
O, since the end of life 's to live
And pay in pence the common debt,
What should it cost us to forgive
Whose daily task is to forget ?

You babbled in the well-known voice—
Not new, not new the words you said.
You touched me off that famous poise,
That old effect, of neck and head.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Dear, was it really you and I ?
In truth the riddle 's ill to read,
So many are the deaths we die
Before we can be dead indeed.

XVI

SPACE and dread and the dark—
Over a livid stretch of sky
Cloud-monsters crawling, like a funeral train
Of huge, primeval presences
Stooping beneath the weight
Of some enormous, rudimentary grief ;
While in the haunting loneliness
The far sea waits and wanders with a sound
As of the trailing skirts of Destiny,
Passing unseen
To some immitigable end
With her gray henchman, Death.

What larve, what spectre is this
Thrilling the wilderness to life
As with the bodily shape of Fear ?
What but a desperate sense,
A strong foreboding of those dim
Interminable continents, forlorn
And many-silenced, in a dusk
Inviolable utterly, and dead
As the poor dead it huddles and swarms and
styes
In hugger-mugger through eternity ?

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Life—life—let there be life !
Better a thousand times the roaring hours
When wave and wind,
Like the Arch-Murderer in flight
From the Avenger at his heel,
Storm through the desolate fastnesses
And wild waste places of the world !

Life—give me life until the end,
That at the very top of being,
The battle-spirit shouting in my blood,
Out of the reddest hell of the fight
I may be snatched and flung
Into the everlasting lull,
The immortal, incommunicable dream.

XVII

CARMEN PATIBULARE

To H. S.

TREE, Old Tree of the Triple Crook
And the rope of the Black Election,
'Tis the faith of the Fool that a race you rule
Can never achieve perfection :
So ' It 's O, for the time of the new Sublime
And the better than human way,
When the Rat (poor beast) shall come to his
own
And the Wolf shall have his day ! '

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

For Tree, Old Tree of the Triple Beam
And the power of provocation,
You have cockered the Brute with your dreadful
fruit

Till your thought is mere stupration :
And ' It 's how should we rise to be pure and
wise,

And how can we choose but fall,
So long as the Hangman makes us dread,
And the Noose floats free for all ? '

So Tree, Old Tree of the Triple Coign
And the trick there 's no recalling,
They will haggle and hew till they hack you
through

And at last they lay you sprawling :
When ' Hey ! for the hour of the race in flower
And the long good-bye to sin !
And the fires of Hell gone out for the lack
Of the fuel to keep them in ! '

But Tree, Old Tree of the Triple Bough
And the ghastly Dreams that tend you,
Your growth began with the life of Man,
And only his death can end you.
They may tug in line at your hempen twine,
They may flourish with axe and saw ;
But your taproot drinks of the Sacred Springs
In the living rock of Law.

And Tree, Old Tree of the Triple Fork,
When the spent sun reels and blunders
Down a welkin lit with the flare of the Pit
As it seethes in spate and thunders,

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Stern on the glare of the tortured air
Your lines august shall gloom,
And your master-beam be the last thing whelmed
In the ruining roar of Doom.

XVIII

I. M.

MARGARET EMMA HENLEY

(1888-1894)

WHEN you wake in your crib,
You, an inch of experience—
Vaulted about
With the wonder of darkness ;
Wailing and striving
To reach from your feebleness
Something you feel
Will be good to and cherish you,
Something you know
And can rest upon blindly :
O, then a hand
(Your mother's, your mother's !)
By the fall of its fingers
All knowledge, all power to you,
Out of the dreary,
Discouraging strangenesses
Comes to and masters you,
Takes you, and lovingly

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Woos you and soothes you
Back, as you cling to it,
Back to some comforting
Corner of sleep.

So you wake in your bed,
Having lived, having loved ;
But the shadows are there,
And the world and its kingdoms
Incredibly faded ;
And you grope through the Terror
Above you and under
For the light, for the warmth,
The assurance of life ;
But the blasts are ice-born,
And your heart is nigh burst
With the weight of the gloom
And the stress of your strangled
And desperate endeavour :
Sudden a hand—
Mother, O Mother !—
God at His best to you,
Out of the roaring,
Impossible silences,
Falls on and urges you,
Mightily, tenderly,
Forth, as you clutch at it,
Forth to the infinite
Peace of the Grave.

October 1891.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

XIX

I. M.

R. L. S.

(1850-1894)

O, TIME and Change, they range and range
From sunshine round to thunder !—
They glance and go as the great winds blow,
And the best of our dreams drive under :
For Time and Change estrange, estrange—
And, now they have looked and seen us,
O, we that were dear, we are all-too near
With the thick of the world between us.

O, Death and Time, they chime and chime
Like bells at sunset falling !—
They end the song, they right the wrong,
They set the old echoes calling :
For Death and Time bring on the prime
Of God's own chosen weather,
And we lie in the peace of the Great Release
As once in the grass together.

February 1891.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

XX

THE shadow of Dawn ;
Stillness and stars and over-mastering dreams
Of Life and Death and Sleep ;
Heard over gleaming flats, the old, unchanging
 sound
Of the old, unchanging Sea.

My soul and yours—
O, hand in hand let us fare forth, two ghosts,
Into the ghostliness,
The infinite and abounding solitudes,
Beyond—O, beyond !—beyond . . .

Here in the porch
Upon the multitudinous silences
Of the kingdoms of the grave,
We twain are you and I—two ghosts Omnipotence
Can touch no more . . . no more !

XXI

TREES and the menace of night ;
Then a long, lonely, leaden mere
Backed by a desolate fell,
As by a spectral battlement ; and then,
Low-brooding, interpenetrating all,

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

A vast, gray, listless, inexpressive sky,
So beggared, so incredibly bereft
Of starlight and the song of racing worlds,
It might have bellied down upon the Void
Where as in terror Light was beginning to be.

Hist ! In the trees fulfilled of night
(Night and the wretchedness of the sky)
Is it the hurry of the rain ?
Or the noise of a drive of the Dead,
Streaming before the irresistible Will
Through the strange dusk of this, the Debate-
able Land
Between their place and ours ?

Like the forgetfulness
Of the work-a-day world made visible,
A mist falls from the melancholy sky.
A messenger from some lost and loving soul,
Hopeless, far wandered, dazed
Here in the provinces of life,
A great white moth fades miserably past.

Thro' the trees in the strange dead night,
Under the vast dead sky,
Forgetting and forgot, a drift of Dead
Sets to the mystic mere, the phantom fell,
And the unimagined vastitudes beyond.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

XXII

To P. A. G.

HERE they trysted, here they strayed,
In the leafage dewy and boon,
Many a man and many a maid,
And the morn was merry June.
'Death is fleet, Life is sweet,'
Sang the blackbird in the may ;
And the hour with flying feet,
While they dreamed, was yesterday.

Many a maid and many a man
Found the leafage close and boon ;
Many a destiny began—
O, the morn was merry June !
Dead and gone, dead and gone,
(Hark the blackbird in the may !)
Life and Death went hurrying on,
Cheek on cheek—and where were they ?

Dust on dust engendering dust
In the leafage fresh and boon,
Man and maid fulfil their trust—
Still the morn turns merry June.
Mother Life, Father Death,
(O, the blackbird in the may !)
Each the other's breath for breath,
Fleet the times of the world away.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

XXIII

To A. C.

Nor to the staring Day,
For all the importunate questionings he pursues
In his big, violent voice,
Shall those mild things of bulk and multitude,
The Trees—God's sentinels
Over His gift of live, life-giving air,
Yield of their huge, unutterable selves.
Midsummer-manifold, each one
Voluminous, a labyrinth of life,
They keep their greenest musings, and the dim
dreams
That haunt their leafier privacies,
Dissembled, baffling the random gapeseed still
With blank full-faces, or the innocent guile
Of laughter flickering back from shine to shade,
And disappearances of homing birds,
And frolicsome freaks
Of little boughs that frisk with little boughs.

But at the word
Of the ancient, sacerdotal Night,
Night of the many secrets, whose effect—
Transfiguring, hierophantic, dread—
Themselves alone may fully apprehend,
They tremble and are changed.
In each, the uncouth individual soul
Looms forth and glooms
Essential, and, their bodily presences
Touched with inordinate significance,

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Wearing the darkness like the livery
Of some mysterious and tremendous guild,
They brood—they menace—they appal ;
Or the anguish of prophecy tears them, and they
wring

Wild hands of warning in the face
Of some inevitable advance of doom ;
Or, each to the other bending, beckoning, signing
As in some monstrous market-place,
They pass the news, these Gossips of the Prime,
In that old speech their forefathers
Learned on the lawns of Eden, ere they heard
The troubled voice of Eve
Naming the wondering folk of Paradise.

Your sense is sealed, or you should hear them tell
The tale of their dim life, with all
Its compost of experience : how the Sun
Spreads them their daily feast,
Sumptuous, of light, firing them as with wine ;
Of the old Moon's fitful solicitude
And those mild messages the Stars
Descend in silver silences and dews ;
Or what the sweet-breathing West,
Wanton with wading in the swirl of the wheat,
Said, and their leafage laughed ;
And how the wet-winged Angel of the Rain
Came whispering . . . whispering ; and the gifts
of the Year—

The sting of the stirring sap
Under the wizardry of the young-eyed Spring,
Their summer amplitudes of pomp,
Their rich autumnal melancholy, and the shrill,

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

Embittered housewifery
Of the lean Winter : all such things,
And with them all the goodness of the Master,
Whose right hand blesses with increase and life,
Whose left hand honours with decay and death.

Thus under the constraint of Night
These gross and simple creatures,
Each in his scores of rings, which rings are years,
A servant of the Will !
And God, the Craftsman, as He walks
The floor of His workshop, hearkens, full of cheer
In thus accomplishing
The aims of His miraculous artistry.

RHYMES AND RHYTHMS

EPILOGUE

*These, to you now, O, more than ever now—
Now that the Ancient Enemy
Has passed, and we, we two that are one, have seen
A piece of perfect Life
Turn to so ravishing a shape of Death
The Arch-Discomforter might well have smiled
In pity and pride,
Even as he bore his lovely and innocent spoil
From those home-kingdoms he left desolate !*

*Poor windlestraws
On the great, sullen, roaring pool of Time
And Chance and Change, I know !
But they are yours, as I am, till we attain
That end for which we make, we two that are one :
A little, exquisite Ghost
Between us, smiling with the serenest eyes
Seen in this world, and calling, calling still
In that clear voice whose infinite subtleties
Of sweetness, thrilling back across the grave,
Break the poor heart to hear :—
 ‘ Come, Dadsie, come !
Mama, how long—how long ! ’*

July 1897.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER



ENVOY

*My songs were once of the sunrise :
They shouted it over the bar ;
First-footing the dawns, they flourished,
And flamed with the morning star.*

*My songs are now of the sunset :
Their brows are touched with light
But their feet are lost in the shadows
And wet with the dews of night.*

*Yet for the joy in their making
Take them, O fond and true,
And for his sake who made them
Let them be dear to You.*

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

PRÆLUDIUM

Largo espressivo

IN sumptuous chords, and strange,
Through rich yet poignant harmonies :
Subtle and strong browns, reds
Magnificent with death and the pride of death,
Thin, clamant greens
And delicate yellows that exhaust
The exquisite chromatics of decay :
From ruining gardens, from reluctant woods—
Dear, multitudinously reluctant woods !—
And sering margents, forced
To be lean and bare and perished grace by grace,
And flower by flower discharmed,
Comes, to a purpose none,
Not even the Scorer, which is the Fool, can blink,
The dead-march of the year.

Dead things and dying ! Now the long-laboured
soul

Listens, and pines. But never a note of hope
Sounds : whether in those high,
Transcending unisons of resignation
That speed the sovran sun,
As he goes southing, weakening, minishing,
Almighty in obedience ; or in those
Small, sorrowful colloquies
Of bronze and russet and gold,
Colour with colour, dying things with dead,
That break along this visual orchestra :
As in that other one, the audible,
Horn answers horn, hautboy and violin

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Talk, and the 'cello calls the clarionet
And flute, and the poor heart is glad.
There is no hope in these—only despair.

Then, destiny in act, ensues
That most tremendous passage in the score :
When hangman rains and winds have wrought
Their worst, and, the brave lights gone down,
The low strings, the brute brass, the sullen drums
Sob, grovel, and curse themselves
Silent. . . .

But on the spirit of Man
And on the heart of the World there falls
A strange, half-desperate peace :
A war-worn, militant, gray jubilation
In the unkind, implacable tyranny
Of Winter, the obscene,
Old, capulous Regent, who in his loins—
O, who but feels he carries in his loins
The wild, sweet-blooded, wonderful harlot,
Spring ?

I

Low—low
Over a perishing after-glow,
A thin, red shred of moon
Trailed. In the windless air
The poplars all ranked lean and chill.
The smell of winter loitered there,
And the Year's heart felt still.
Yet not so far away

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Seemed the mad Spring,
But that, as lovers will,
I let my laughing heart go play,
As it had been a fond maid's frolicking ;
And, turning thrice the gold I'd got,
In the good gloom
Solemnly wished me—what ?
What, and with whom ?

II

MOON of half-candied meres
And flurrying, fading snows ;
Moon of unkindly rains,
Wild skies, and troubled vanes ;
When the Norther snarls and bites,
And the lone moon walks a-cold,
And the lawns grizzle o' nights,
And wet fogs search the fold :
Here in this heart of mine
A dream that warms like wine,
A dream one other knows,
Moon of the roaring weirs
And the sip-sopping close,
February Fill-Dyke,
Shapes like a royal rose—
A red, red rose !

O, but the distance clears !
O, but the daylight grows !
Soon shall the pied wind-flowers
Babble of greening hours,

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Primrose and daffodil
Yearn to a fathering sun,
The lark have all his will,
The thrush be never done,
And April, May, and June
Go to the same blythe tune
As this blythe dream of mine !
Moon when the crocus peers,
Moon when the violet blows,
February Fair-Maid,
Haste, and let come the rose—
Let come the rose !

III

THE night dislimns, and breaks
Like snows slow thawed ;
An evil wind awakes
On lea and lawn ;
The low East quakes ; and hark !
Out of the kindless dark,
A fierce, protesting lark,
High in the horror of dawn !

A shivering streak of light,
A scurry of rain ;
Bleak day from bleaker night
Creeps pinched and fain ;
The old gloom thins and dies,
And in the wretched skies
A new gloom, sick to rise,
Sprawls, like a thing in pain.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

And yet, what matter—say !—
 The shuddering trees,
The Easter-stricken day,
 The sodden leas ?
The good bird, wing and wing
With Time, finds heart to sing,
As he were hastening
 The swallow o'er the seas.

IV

It came with the year's first crocus
 In a world of winds and snows—
Because it would, because it must,
Because of life and time and lust ;
And a year's first crocus served my turn
 As well as the year's first rose.

The March rack hurries and hectors,
 The March dust heaps and blows ;
But the primrose flouts the daffodil,
And here 's the patient violet still ;
And the year's first crocus brought me luck,
 So hey for the year's first rose !

V

THE good South-West on sea-worn wings
 Comes shepherding the good rain ;
The brave Sea breaks, and glooms, and swings,
 A weltering, glittering plain.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Sound, Sea of England, sound and shine,
Blow, English Wind, amain,
Till in this old, gray heart of mine
The Spring need wake again !

VI

IN the red April dawn,
In the wild April weather,
From brake and thicket and lawn
The birds sing all together.

The look of the hoyden Spring
Is pinched and shrewish and cold ;
But all together they sing
Of a world that can never be old :

Of a world still young—still young !—
Whose last word won't be said,
Nor her last song dreamed and sung,
Till her last true lover's dead !

VII

THE April sky sags low and drear,
The April winds blow cold,
The April rains fall gray and sheer,
And yeanlings keep the fold.

But the rook has built, and the song-birds quire,
And over the faded lea
The lark soars glorying, gyre on gyre,
And he is the bird for me !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

For he sings as if from his watchman's height
 He saw, this blighting day,
The far vales break into colour and light
 From the banners and arms of May.

VIII

SHADOW and gleam on the Downland
 Under the low Spring sky,
Shadow and gleam in my spirit—
 Why ?

A bird, in his nest rejoicing,
 Cheers and flatters and woos :
A fresh voice flutters my fancy—
 Whose ?

And the humour of April frolics
 And bickers in blade and bough—
O, to meet for the primal kindness
 Now !

IX

THE wind on the wold,
 With sea-scents and sea-dreams attended,
 Is wine !
The air is as gold
 In elixir—it takes so the splendid
 Sunshine !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

O, the larks in the blue !

How the song of them glitters, and glances,
And gleams !

The old music sounds new—

And it's O, the wild Spring, and his chances
And dreams !

There's a lift in the blood—

O, this gracious, and thirsting, and aching
Unrest !

All life's at the bud,

And my heart, full of April, is breaking
My breast.

x

DEEP in my gathering garden

A gallant thrush has built ;

And his quaverings on the stillness

Like light made song are spilt.

They gleam, they glint, they sparkle,

They glitter along the air,

Like the song of a sunbeam netted

In a tangle of red-gold hair.

And I long, as I laugh and listen,

For the angel-hour that shall bring

My part, pre-ordained and appointed,

In the miracle of Spring.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XI

WHAT doth the blackbird in the boughs
Sing all day to his nested spouse ?
What but the song of his old Mother-Earth,
In her mighty humour of lust and mirth ?
' Love and God's will go wing and wing,
And as for death, is there any such thing ? '—
In the shadow of death,
So, at the beck of the wizard Spring
The dear bird saith—
 So the bird saith !

Caught with us all in the nets of fate,
So the sweet wretch sings early and late ;
And, O my fairest, after all,
The heart of the World's in his innocent call.
The will of the World's with him wing and
 wing :—
' Life—life—life ! 'Tis the sole great thing
This side of death,
Heart on heart in the wonder of Spring ! '
So the bird saith—
 The wise bird saith !

XII

THIS world, all hoary
With song and story,
Rolls in a glory
 Of youth and mirth ;

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Above and under
Clothed on with wonder,
Sunrise and thunder,
 And death and birth.
His broods befriending
With grace unending
And gifts transcending
 A god's at play,
Yet do his meetness
And sovran sweetness
Hold in the jocund purpose of May.

So take your pleasure,
And in full measure
Use of your treasure,
 When birds sing best !
For when heaven's bluest,
And earth feels newest,
And love longs truest,
 And takes not rest :
When winds blow cleanest,
And seas roll sheenest,
And lawns lie greenest :
 Then, night and day,
Dear life counts dearest,
And God walks nearest
To them that praise Him, praising His May.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XIII

*I talked one midnight with the jolly ghost
Of a gray ancestor, Tom Heywood high ;
And, ' Here 's,' says he, his old heart liquor-lifted—
' Here 's how we did when Gloriana shone :*

All in a garden green
 Thrushes were singing ;
Red rose and white between,
 Lilies were springing ;
It was the merry May ;
 Yet sang my Lady :—
' Nay, Sweet, now nay, now nay !
 I am not ready.'

Then to a pleasant shade
 I did invite her :
All things a concert made,
 For to delight her ;
Under, the grass was gay ;
 Yet sang my Lady :—
' Nay, Sweet, now nay, now nay !
 I am not ready.'

XIV

WHY do you linger and loiter, O most sweet ?
Why do you falter and delay,
Now that the insolent, high-blooded May
Comes greeting and to greet ?

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Comes with her instant summonings to stray
Down the green, antient way—
The leafy, still, rose-haunted, eye-proof street !—
Where true lovers each other may entreat,
Ere the gold hair turn gray ?
Entreat, and fleet
Life gaudily, and so play out their play,
Even with the triumphing May—
The young-eyed, smiling, irresistible May !

Why do you loiter and linger, O most dear ?
Why do you dream and palter and stay,
When every dawn, that rushes up the bay,
Brings nearer, and more near,
The Terror, the Discomforter, whose prey,
Belovèd, we must be ? Nor prayer, nor tear,
Lets his arraignment ; but we disappear,
What time the gold turns gray,
Into the sheer,
Blind gulfs unglutted of mere Yesterday,
With the unlingering May—
The good, fulfilling, irresponsible May !

xv

*Come where my Lady lies,
Sleeping down the golden hours !
Cover her with flowers.*

Bluebells from the clearings,
Flag-flowers from the rills,
Wildings from the lush hedgerows,
Delicate daffodils,

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Sweetlings from the formal plots,
Bloomkins from the bowers—
Heap them round her where she sleeps,
Cover her with flowers !

Sweet-pea and pansy,
Red hawthorn and white ;
Gilliflowers—like praising souls ;
Lilies—lamps of light :
Nurselings of what happy winds,
Suns, and stars, and showers !
Joylets good to see and smell—
Cover her with flowers !

Like to sky-born shadows
Mirrored on a stream,
Let their odours meet and mix
And waver through her dream !
Last, the crowded sweetness
Slumber overpowers,
And she feels the lips she loves
Craving through the flowers !

XVI

THE west a glory of green and red and gold,
The magical drifts to north and eastward rolled,
The shining sands, the still, transfigured sea,
The wind so light it scarce begins to be,
As these long days unfold a flower, unfold
Life's rose in me.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Life's rose—life's rose ! Red at my heart it
glows—

Glow and is glad, as in some quiet close
The sun's spoiled darlings their gay life renew !
Only, the clement rain, the mothering dew,
Daytime and night, all things that make the rose,
Are you, dear—you !

XVII

Look down, dear eyes, look down,
Lest you betray her gladness.
Dear brows, do naught but frown,
Lest men miscall my madness.

Come not, dear hands, so near,
Lest all besides come nearer.
Dear heart, hold me less dear,
Lest time hold nothing dearer.

Keep me, dear lips, O, keep
The great last word unspoken,
Lest other eyes go weep,
And other lives lie broken !

XVIII

POPLAR and lime and chestnut
Meet in a living screen ;
And there the winds and the sunbeams keep
A revel of gold and green.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

O, the green dreams and the golden,
The golden thoughts and green,
This green and golden end of May
My lover and me between !

XIX

HITHER, this solemn eventide,
All flushed and mystical and blue,
When the late bird sings
And sweet-breathed garden-ghosts walk sudden
and wide,
Hesper, that bringeth all good things,
Brings me a dream of you.
And in my heart, dear heart, it comes and goes,
Even as the south wind lingers and falls and
blows,
Even as the south wind sighs and tarries and
streams,
Among the living leaves about and round ;
With a still, soothing sound,
As of a multitude of dreams
Of love, and the longing of love, and love's
delight,
Thronging, ten thousand deep,
Into the uncreating Night,
With semblances and shadows to fulfil,
Amaze, and thrill
The strange, dispeopled silences of Sleep.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XX

AFTER the grim daylight,
Night—
Night and the stars and the sea !
Only the sea, and the stars
And the star-shown sails and spars—
Naught else in the night for me !

Over the northern height,
Light—
Light and the dawn of a day
With nothing for me but a breast
Laboured with love's unrest,
And the irk of an idle May !

XXI

Love, which is lust, is the Lamp in the Tomb.
Love, which is lust, is the Call from the Gloom.

Love, which is lust, is the Main of Desire.
Love, which is lust, is the Centric Fire.

So man and woman will keep their trust,
Till the very Springs of the Sea run dust.

Yea, each with the other will lose and win,
Till the very Sides of the Grave fall in.

For the strife of Love's the abysmal strife,
And the word of Love is the Word of Life.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

And they that go with the Word unsaid,
Though they seem of the living, are damned and
dead.

XXII

BETWEEN the dusk of a summer night
And the dawn of a summer day,
We caught at a mood as it passed in flight,
And we bade it stoop and stay.
And what with the dawn of night began
With the dusk of day was done ;
For that is the way of woman and man,
When a hazard has made them one.

Arc upon arc, from shade to shine,
The World went thundering free ;
And what was his errand but hers and mine—
The lords of him, I and she ?
O, it's die we must, but it's live we can,
And the marvel of earth and sun
Is all for the joy of woman and man
And the longing that makes them one.

XXIII

I TOOK a hansom on to-day
For a round I used to know—
That I used to take for a woman's sake
In a fever of to-and-fro.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

There were the landmarks one and all—
What did they stand to show ?
Street and square and river were there—
Where was the antient woe ?
Never a hint of a challenging hope
Nor a hope laid sick and low,
But a longing dead as its kindred sped
A thousand years ago !

XXIV

ONLY a freakish wisp of hair ?—
Nay, but its wildest, its most frolic whorl
Stands for a slim, enamoured, sweet-fleshed girl !
And so, a tangle of dream and charm and fun,
Its every crook a promise and a snare,
Its every dowe, or genially gadding
Or crisply curled,
Heartening and madding,
Empales a novel and peculiar world
Of right, essential fantasies,
And shining acts as yet undone,
But in these wonder-working days
Soon, soon to ask our sovran Lord, the Sun,
For countenance and praise,
As of the best his storying eye hath seen,
And his vast memory can parallel,
Among the darling victories—
Beneficent, beautiful, inexpressible—
Of life on time !—

Yet have they flashed and been

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

In millions, since 'twas his to bring
The heaven-creating Spring,
An angel of adventure and delight,
In all her beauty and all her strength and worth,
With her great guerdons of romance and spright,
And those high needs that fill the flesh with
 might,
Home to the citizens of this good, green earth.

Poor souls—they have but time and place
To play their transient little play
And sing their singular little song,
Ere they are rushed away
Into the antient, undisclosing Night ;
And none is left to tell of the clear eyes
That filled them with God's grace,
And turned the iron skies to skies of gold !
None ; but the sweetest She herself grows old—
Grows old, and dies ;
And, but for such a lovely snatch of hair
As this, none—none could guess, or know
That She was kind and fair,
And he had nights and days beyond compare—
How many dusty and silent years ago !

XXV

THIS is the moon of roses,
 The lovely and flowerful time ;
And, as white roses climb the wall,
 Your dreams about me climb.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

This is the moon of roses,
Glad and golden and blue ;
And, as red roses drink of the sun,
My dreams they drink of you.

This is the moon of roses !
The cherishing South-West blows
And life, dear heart, for me and you,
O, life's a rejoicing rose.

XXVI

JUNE, and a warm, sweet rain ;
June, and the call of a bird :
To a lover in pain
What lovelier word ?

Two of each other fain
Happily heart on heart :
So in the wind and rain
Spring bears his part !

O, to be heart on heart
One with the warm June rain,
God with us from the start,
And no more pain !

XXVII

It was a bowl of roses :
There in the light they lay,
Languishing, glorying, glowing
Their life away.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

And the soul of them rose like a presence,
 Into me crept and grew,
And filled me with something—some one—
 O, was it you ?

XXVIII

Your feet as glad
And light as a dove's homing wings, you came—
Came with your sweets to fill my hands,
My sense with your perfume.

We closed with lips
Grown weary and fain with longing from afar,
The while your grave, enamoured eyes
Drank down the dream in mine.

Till the great need
So lovely and so instant grew, it seemed
The embodied Spirit of the Spring
Hung at me, heart on heart.

XXIX

A WORLD of leafage murmurous and a-twinkle ;
The green, delicious plenitude of June ;
Love and laughter and song
The blue day long
Going to the same glad, golden tune—
The same glad tune !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Clouds on the dim, delighting skies a-sprinkle ;
Poplars black in the wake of a setting moon ;
Love and languor and sleep
And the star-sown deep
Going to the same good, golden tune—
The same good tune !

XXX

I SEND you roses—red, like love,
And white, like death, sweet friend :
Born in your bosom to rejoice,
Languish, and droop, and end.

If the white roses tell of death,
Let the red roses mend
The talk with true stories of love
Unchanging till the end.

Red and white roses, love and death—
What else is left to send ?
For what is life but love, the means,
And death, true Wife, the end ?

XXXI

THESE glad, these great, these goodly days
Bewildering hope, outrunning praise,
The Earth, renewed by the great Sun's longing,
Utters her joy in a million ways !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

What is there left, sweet Soul and true—
What, for us and our dream to do ?

What but to take this mighty Summer
As it were made for me and you ?

Take it and live it beam by beam,
Motes of light on a gleaming stream,
Glare by glare and glory on glory
Through to the ash of this flaming dream !

XXXII

THE downs, like uplands in Eden,
Gleam in an afterglow
Like a rose-world ruining earthwards—
Mystical, wistful, slow !

Near and afar in the leafage,
That last glad call to the nest !
And the thought of you hangs and triumphs
With Hesper low in the west !

Till the song and the light and the colour,
The passion of earth and sky,
Are blent in a rapture of boding
Of the death we should one day die.

XXXIII

THE time of the silence
Of birds is upon us :
Rust in the chestnut leaf,

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Dust in the stubble :
The turn of the Year
And the call to decay.

Stately and splendid,
The Summer passes :
Sad with satiety,
Sick with fulfilment ;
Spent and consumed,
But august till the end.

By wilting hedgerows
And white-hot highways,
Bearing its memories
Even as a burden,
The tired heart plods
For a place of rest.

XXXIV

THERE was no kiss that day ?
No intimate Yea-and-Nay,
No sweets in hand, no tender, lingering touch ?
None of those desperate, exquisite caresses,
So instant—O, so brief !—and yet so much,
The thought of the swiftest lifts and blesses ?
Nor any one of those great royal words,
Those sovran privacies of speech,
Frank as the call of April birds,
That, whispered, live a life of gold
Among the heart's still sainted memories,
And irk, and thrill, and ravish, and beseech,

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Even when the dream of dreams in death's
a-cold ?

No, there was none of these,

Dear one, and yet—

O, eyes on eyes ! O, voices breaking still,

For all the watchful will,

Into a kinder kindness than seemed due

From you to me, and me to you !

And that hot-eyed, close-throated, blind regret

Of woman and man baulked and debarred the
blue !

No kiss—no kiss that day ?

Nay, rather, though we seemed to wear the rue,

Sweet friend, how many, and how goodly—say !

XXXV

To ADA CROSSLEY

SING to me, sing, and sing again,

My glad, great-throated nightingale :

Sing, as the good sun through the rain—

Sing, as the home-wind in the sail !

Sing to me life, and toil, and time,

O bugle of dawn, O flute of rest !

Sing, and once more, as in the prime,

There shall be naught but seems the best.

And sing me at the last of love :

Sing that old magic of the May,

That makes the great world laugh and move

As lightly as our dream to-day !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XXXVI

*We sat late, late—talking of many things.
He told me of his grief, and, in the telling,
The gist of his tale showed to me, rhymed, like this.*

It came, the news, like a fire in the night,
That life and its best were done ;
And there was never so dazed a wretch
In the beat of the living sun.

I read the news, and the terms of the news
Reeled random round my brain
Like the senseless, tedious buzzle and boom
Of a bluefly in the pane.

So I went for the news to the house of the news,
But the words were left unsaid,
For the face of the house was blank with blinds,
And I knew that she was dead.

XXXVII

'Twas in a world of living leaves
That we two reaped and bound our sheaves :
They were of white roses and red,
And in the scything they were dead.

Now the high Autumn flames afield,
And what is all his golden yield
To that we took, and sheaved, and bound
In the green dusk that gladdened round ?

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Yet must the memory grieve and ache
Of that we did for dear love's sake,
But may no more under the sun,
Being, like our summer, spent and done.

XXXVIII

SINCE those we love and those we hate,
With all things mean and all things great,
Pass in a desperate disarray
Over the hills and far away :

It must be, Dear, that, late or soon,
Out of the ken of the watching moon,
We shall abscond with Yesterday
Over the hills and far away.

What does it matter ? As I deem,
We shall but follow as brave a dream
As ever smiled a wanton May
Over the hills and far away.

We shall remember, and, in pride,
Fare forth, fulfilled and satisfied,
Into the land of Ever-and-Aye,
Over the hills and far away.

XXXIX

THESE were the woods of wonder
We found so close and boon,
When the bride-month in her beauty
Lay mouth to mouth with June.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

November, the old, lean widow,
 Sniffs, and snivels, and shrills,
And the bowers are all dismantled,
 And the long grass wets and chills ;

And I hate these dismal dawns,
 These miserable even-ends,
These orts, and rags, and heeltaps—
 This dream of being merely friends.

XL

‘ DEAREST, when I am dead,
 Make one last song for me :
Sing what I would have said—
 Righting life’s wrong for me.

‘ Tell them how, early and late,
 Glad ran the days with me,
Seeing how goodly and great,
 Love, were your ways with me.’

XLI

DEAR hands, so many times so much
 When the spent year was green and prime,
Come, take your fill, and touch
 This one poor time.

Dear lips, that could not leave unsaid
 One sweet-souled syllable of delight,
Once more—and be as dead
 In the dead night.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Dear eyes, so fond to read in mine
The message of our counted years,
Look your proud last, nor shine
Through tears—through tears.

XLII

WHEN, in what other life,
Where in what old, spent star,
Systems ago, dead vastitudes afar,
Were we two bird and bough, or man and wife ?
Or wave and spar ?
Or I the beating sea, and you the bar
On which it breaks ? I know not, I !
But this, O this, my Very Dear, I know :
Your voice awakes old echoes in my heart ;
And things I say to you now are said once more ;
And, Sweet, when we two part,
I feel I have seen you falter and linger so,
So hesitate, and turn, and cling—yet go,
As once in some immemorable Before,
Once on some fortunate yet thrice-blasted shore.
Was it for good ?
O, these poor eyes are wet ;
And yet, O, yet,
Now that we know, I would not, if I could
Forget.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XLIII

THE rain and the wind, the wind and the rain—
They are with us like a disease :
They worry the heart, they work the brain,
As they shoulder and clutch at the shrieking pane,
And savage the helpless trees.

What does it profit a man to know
These tattered and tumbling skies
A million stately stars will show,
And the ruining grace of the after-glow
And the rush of the wild sunrise ?

Ever the rain—the rain and the wind !
Come, hunch with me over the fire,
Dream of the dreams that leered and grinned,
Ere the blood of the Year got chilled and thinned,
And the death came on desire !

XLIV

*He made this gracious Earth a hell
With Love and Drink. I cannot tell
Of which he died. But Death was well.*

Will I die of drink ?
Why not ?
Won't I pause and think ?
—What ?
Why in seeming wise
Waste your breath ?
Everybody dies—
And of death !

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Youth—if you find it's youth
Too late ?
Truth—and the back of truth ?
Straight,
Be it love or liquor,
What 's the odds,
So it slide you quicker
To the gods ?

XLV

O, THESE long nights of days !
All the year's baseness in the ways,
All the year's wretchedness in the skies ;
While on the blind, disheartened sea
A tramp-wind plies
Cringingly and dejectedly !
And rain and darkness, mist and mud,
They cling, they close, they sneak into the
blood,
They crawl and crowd upon the brain :
Till in a dull, dense monotone of pain
The past is found a kind of maze,
At whose every coign and crook,
Broad angle and privy nook,
There waits a hooded Memory,
Sad, yet with strange, bright, unrepublishing
eyes.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XLVI

IN Shoreham River, hurrying down
To the live sea,
By working, marrying, breeding Shoreham Town,
Breaking the sunset's wistful and solemn dream,
An old, black rotter of a boat
Past service to the labouring, tumbling flote,
Lay stranded in mid-stream :
With a horrid list, a frightening lapse from the
 line,
That made me think of legs and a broken spine :
Soon, all-too soon,
Ungainly and forlorn to lie
Full in the eye
Of the cynical, discomfortable moon
That, as I looked, stared from the fading sky,
A clown's face flour'd for work. And by and by
The wide-winged sunset wanned and waned ;
The lean night-wind crept westward, chilling and
 sighing ;
The poor old hulk remained,
Stuck helpless in mid-ebb. And I knew why—
Why, as I looked, my heart felt crying.¹
For, as I looked, the good green earth seemed
 dying—
Dying or dead ;
And, as I looked on the old boat, I said :—
' *Dear God, it's I !* '

¹ *At two years old, my child, being chidden, found this striking phrase.—W. E. H.*

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XLVII

COME by my bed,
What time the gray ghost shrieks and flies ;
Take in your hands my head,
And look, O look, into my failing eyes ;
And, by God's grace,
Even as He sunders body and breath,
The shadow of your face
Shall pass with me into the run
Of the Beyond, and I shall keep and save
Your beauty, as it used to be,
An absolute part of me,
Lying there, dead and done,
Far from the sovran bounty of the sun,
Down in the grisly colonies of the Grave.

XLVIII

GRAY hills, gray skies, gray lights,
And still, gray sea—
O fond, O fair,
The Mays that were,
When the wild days and wilder nights
Made it like heaven to be !

Gray head, gray heart, gray dreams—
O, breath by breath,
Night-tide and day
Lapse gentle and gray,
As to a murmur of tired streams,
Into the haze of death.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

XLIX

SILENCE, loneliness, darkness—
 These, and of these my fill,
While God in the rush of the Maytide
 Without is working His will.

Without are the wind and the wall-flowers,
 The leaves and the nests and the rain,
And in all of them God is making
 His beautiful purpose plain.

But I wait in a horror of strangeness—
 A tool on His workshop floor,
Worn to the butt, and banished
 His hand for evermore.

L

So let me hence as one
Whose part in the world has been dreamed out
 and done :
One that hath fairly earned and spent
In pride of heart and jubilation of blood
Such wages, be they counted bad or good,
As Time, the old taskmaster, was moved to pay ;
And, having warred and suffered, and passed on
Those gifts the Arbiters preferred and gave,
Fare, grateful and content,
Down the dim way
Whereby races innumerable have gone,
Into the silent universe of the grave.

HAWTHORN AND LAVENDER

Grateful for what hath been—
For what my hand hath done, mine eyes have
 seen,
My heart been privileged to know ;
With all my lips in love have brought
To lips that yearned in love to them, and wrought
In the way of wrath, and pity, and sport, and
 song :
Content, this miracle of being alive
Dwindling, that I, thrice weary of worst and best,
May shed my duds, and go
From right and wrong,
And, ceasing to regret, and long, and strive,
Accept the past, and be for ever at rest.

FINALE

Schizzando ma con sentimento

A SIGH sent wrong,
A kiss that goes astray,
A sorrow the years endlong—
So they say.

So let it be—
Come the sorrow, the kiss, the sigh !
They are life, dear life, all three,
And we die.

WORTHING, 1899-1901.

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

(*To* Charles Whibley)

1890-1892



ST. MARGARET's bells,
 Quiring their innocent, old-world canticles,
 Sing in the storied air,
 All rosy-and-golden, as with memories
 Of woods at evensong, and sands and seas
 Disconsolate for that the night is nigh.
 O, the low, lingering lights ! The large last
 gleam
 (Hark ! how those brazen choristers cry and
 call !)
 Touching these solemn ancientries, and there,
 The silent River ranging tide-mark high
 And the callow, gray-faced Hospital,
 With the strange glimmer and glamour of a
 dream !
 The Sabbath peace is in the slumbrous trees,
 And from the wistful, the fast-widowing sky
 (Hark ! how those plangent comforters call and
 cry !)
 Falls as in August plots late roseleaves fall.
 The sober Sabbath stir—
 Leisurely voices, desultory feet !—
 Comes from the dry, dust-coloured street,
 Where in their summer frocks the girls go by,
 And sweethearts lean and loiter and confer,

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Just as they did an hundred years ago,
Just as an hundred years to come they will :—
When you and I, Dear Love, lie lost and low,
And sweet-throats none our welkin shall fulfil,
Nor any sunset fade serene and slow ;
But, being dead, we shall not grieve to die.

II

Andante con moto

FORTH from the dust and din,
The crush, the heat, the many-spotted glare,
The odour and sense of life and lust affare,
The wrangle and jangle of unrests,
Let us take horse, Dear Heart, take horse and
win—

As from swart August to the green lap of May—
To quietness and the fresh and fragrant breasts
Of the still, delicious night, not yet aware
In any of her innumerable nests
Of that first sudden splash of dawn,
Clear, sapphirine, luminous, large,
Which tells that soon the flowing springs of day
In deep and ever deeper eddies drawn
Forward and up, in wider and wider way,
Shall float the sands, and brim the shores,
On this our lith of the World, as round it roars
And spins into the outlook of the Sun
(The Lord's first gift, the Lord's especial charge),
With light, with living light, from marge to
marge
Until the course He set and staked be run.

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Through street and square, through square and
street,

Each with his home-grown quality of dark
And violated silence, loud and fleet,
Waylaid by a merry ghost at every lamp,
The hansom wheels and plunges. Hark, O,
hark,

Sweet, how the old mare's bit and chain
Ring back a rough refrain

Upon the marked and cheerful tramp
Of her four shoes ! Here is the Park,
And O, the languid midsummer wafts adust,
The tired midsummer blooms !

O, the mysterious distances, the glooms
Romantic, the august

And solemn shapes ! At night this City of Trees
Turns to a tryst of vague and strange
And monstrous Majesties,

Let loose from some dim underworld to range
These terrene vistas till their twilight sets :
When, dispossessed of wonderfulness, they stand
Beggared and common, plain to all the land
For stooks of leaves ! And lo ! the Wizard
Hour,

His silent, shining sorcery winged with power !

Still, still the streets, between their carcanets
Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep.

But see how gable ends and parapets
In gradual beauty and significance

Emerge ! And did you hear

That little twitter-and-cheep,

Breaking inordinately loud and clear

On this still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere ?

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

'Tis a first nest at matins ! And behold
A rakehell cat—how furtive and acold !
A spent witch homing from some infamous
dance—

Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade !
And now ! a little wind and shy,
The smell of ships (that earnest of romance),
A sense of space and water, and thereby
A lamplit bridge ouching the troubled sky,
And look, O, look ! a tangle of silver gleams
And dusky lights, our River and all his dreams,
His dreams that never save in our deaths can die.

What miracle is happening in the air,
Charging the very texture of the gray
With something luminous and rare ?
The night goes out like an ill-parcelled fire,
And, as one lights a candle, it is day.
The extinguisher, that perks it like a spire
On the little formal church, is not yet green
Across the water : but the house-tops nigher
The corner-lines, the chimneys—look how clean,
How new, how naked ! See the batch of boats,
Here at the stairs, washed in the fresh-sprung
beam !

And those are barges that were goblin floats,
Black, hag-steered, fraught with devilry and
dream !

And in the piles the water frolics clear,
The ripples into loose rings wander and flee,
And we—we can behold that could but hear
The ancient River singing as he goes,

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

New-mailed in morning, to the ancient Sea.
The gas burns lank and jaded in its glass :
The old Ruffian soon shall yawn himself awake,
And light his pipe, and shoulder his tools and
take
His hobnailed way to work !

Let us too pass—
Pass ere the sun leaps and your shadow shows—
Through these long, blindfold rows
Of casements staring blind to right and left,
Each with his gaze turned inward on some piece
Of life in death's own likeness—Life bereft
Of living looks as by the Great Release—
Pass to an exquisite night's more exquisite close !

Reach upon reach of burial—so they feel,
These colonies of dreams ! And as we steal
Homeward together, but for the buxom breeze,
Fitfully frolicking to heel
With news of dawn-drenched woods and tumbling
seas,
We might—thus awed, thus lonely that we are—
Be wandering some dispeopled star,
Some world of memories and unbroken graves,
So broods the abounding Silence near and far :
Till even your footfall craves
Forgiveness of the majesty it braves.

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

III

Scherzando

Down through the ancient Strand
The spirit of October, mild and boon
And sauntering, takes his way
This golden end of afternoon,
As though the corn stood yellow in all the land,
And the ripe apples dropped to the harvest-moon.

Lo ! the round sun, half-down the western slope—
Seen as along an unglazed telescope—
Lingers and lolls, loth to be done with day :
Gifting the long, lean, lanky street
And its abounding confluences of being
With aspects generous and bland ;
Making a thousand harnesses to shine
As with new ore from some enchanted mine,
And every horse's coat so full of sheen
He looks new-tailored, and every 'bus feels clean,
And never a hansom but is worth the feeling ;
And every jeweller within the pale
Offers a real Arabian Night for sale ;
And even the roar
Of the strong streams of toil, that pause and pour
Eastward and westward, sounds suffused—
Seems as it were bemused
And blurred, and like the speech
Of lazy seas on a lotus-haunted beach—
With this enchanted lustrousness,
This mellow magic, that (as a man's caress
Brings back to some faded face, beloved before,
A heavenly shadow of the grace it wore

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Ere the poor eyes were minded to beseech)
Old things transfigures, and you hail and bless
Their looks of long-lapsed loveliness once more :
Till Clement's, angular and cold and staid,
Gleams forth in glamour's very stuffs arrayed ;
And Bride's, her aëry, unsubstantial charm
Through flight on flight of springing, soaring
stone

Grown flushed and warm,
Laughs into life full-mooded and fresh-blown ;
And the high majesty of Paul's
Uplifts a voice of living light, and calls—
Calls to his millions to behold and see
How goodly this his London Town can be !

For earth and sky and air
Are golden everywhere,
And golden with a gold so suave and fine
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.
Trafalgar Square
(The fountains volleying golden glaze)
Shines like an angel-market. High aloft
Over his couchant Lions, in a haze
Shimmering and bland and soft,
A dust of chrysoprase,
Our Sailor takes the golden gaze
Of the saluting sun, and flames superb,
As once he flamed it on his ocean round.

The dingy dreariness of the picture-place,
Turned very nearly bright,
Takes on a luminous transiency of grace,
And shows no more a scandal to the ground.

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

The very blind man pottering on the kerb,
Among the posies and the ostrich feathers
And the rude voices touched with all the weathers
Of the long, varying year,
Shares in the universal alms of light.
The windows, with their fleeting, flickering fires,
The height and spread of frontage shining sheer,
The quiring signs, the rejoicing roofs and spires—
'Tis El Dorado—El Dorado plain,
The Golden City ! And when a girl goes by,
Look ! as she turns her glancing head,
A call of gold is floated from her ear !
Golden, all golden ! In a golden glory,
Long-lapsing down a golden coasted sky,
The day, not dies but, seems
Dispersed in wafts and drifts of gold, and shed
Upon a past of golden song and story
And memories of gold and golden dreams.

IV

Largo e mesto

Out of the poisonous East,
Over a continent of blight,
Like a maleficent Influence released
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,
The Wind-Fiend, the abominable—
The Hangman Wind that tortures temper and
light—
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,
Hard on the skirts of the embittered night ;
And in a cloud unclean

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Of excremental humours, roused to strife
By the operation of some ruinous change,
Wherever his evil mandate run and range,
Into a dire intensity of life,
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down
To the grim job of throttling London Town.

So, by a jealous lightlessness beset
That might have oppressed the dragons of old
time

Crunching and groping in the abysmal slime,
A cave of cut-throat thoughts and villainous
dreams,

Hag-rid and crying with cold and dirt and wet,
The afflicted City, prone from mark to mark
In shameful occultation, seems

A nightmare labyrinthine, dim and drifting,
With wavering gulfs and antic heights, and
shifting,

Rent in the stuff of a material dark,
Wherein the lamplight, scattered and sick and
pale,

Shows like the leper's living blotch of bale :

Uncoiling monstrous into street on street

Paven with perils, teeming with mischance,

Where man and beast go blindfold and in dread,

Working with oaths and threats and faltering feet

Somewhither in the hideousness ahead ;

Working through wicked airs and deadly dews

That make the laden robber grin askance

At the good places in his black romance,

And the poor, loitering harlot rather choose

Go pinched and pined to bed

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Than lurk and shiver and curse her wretched way
From arch to arch, scouting some threepenny
prey.

Forgot his dawns and far-flushed afterglows,
His green garlands and windy eyots forgot,
The old Father-River flows,
His watchfires cores of menace in the gloom,
As he came oozing from the Pit, and bore,
Sunk in his filthily transfigured sides,
Shoals of dishonoured dead to tumble and rot
In the squalor of the universal shore :
His voices sounding through the gruesome air
As from the Ferry where the Boat of Doom
With her blaspheming cargo reels and rides :
The while his children, the brave ships,
No more adventurous and fair,
Nor tripping it light of heel as home-bound
brides,
But infamously enchanted,
Huddle together in the foul eclipse,
Or feel their course by inches desperately,
As through a tangle of alleys murder-haunted,
From sinister reach to reach out—out—to sea.

And Death the while—

Death with his well-worn, lean, professional
smile,

Death in his threadbare working trim—

Comes to your bedside, unannounced and bland,
And with expert, inevitable hand

Feels at your windpipe, fingers you in the lung,
Or flicks the clot well into the labouring heart :

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Thus signifying unto old and young,
However hard of mouth or wild of whim,
'Tis time—'tis time by his ancient watch—to part
From books and women and talk and drink and
art.

And you go humbly after him
To a mean suburban lodging : on the way
To what or where
Not Death, who is old and very wise, can say :
And you—how should you care
So long as, unreclaimed of hell,
The Wind-Fiend, the insufferable,
Thus vicious and thus patient, sits him down
To the black job of burking London Town ?

v

Allegro maestoso

SPRING winds that blow
As over leagues of myrtle-blooms and may ;
Bevies of spring clouds trooping slow,
Like matrons heavy bosomed and aglow
With the mild and placid pride of increase !
Nay,
What makes this insolent and comely stream
Of appetite, this freshet of desire
(Milk from the wild breasts of the wilful Day !),
Down Piccadilly dance and murmur and gleam
In genial wave on wave and gyre on gyre ?
Why does that nymph unparalleled splash and
churn
The wealth of her enchanted urn

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

Till, over-billowing all between
Her cheerful margents, gray and living green,
It floats and wanders, glittering and fleeing,
An estuary of the joy of being ?
Why should the lovely leafage of the Park
Touch to an ecstasy the act of seeing ?
—Sure, sure my paramour, my Bride of Brides,
Lingering and flushed, mysteriously abides
In some dim, eye-proof angle of odorous dark,
Some smiling nook of green-and-golden shade,
In the divine conviction robed and crowned
The globe fulfils his immemorial round
But as the marrying-place of all things made !

There is no man, this deifying day,
But feels the primal blessing in his blood.
There is no woman but disdains—
The sacred impulse of the May
Brightening like sex made sunshine through her
veins—
To vail the ensigns of her womanhood.
None but, rejoicing, flaunts them as she goes,
Bounteous in looks of her delicious best,
On her inviolable quest :
These with their hopes, with their sweet secrets
those,
But all desirable and frankly fair,
As each were keeping some most prosperous
tryst,
And in the knowledge went imparadised !
For look ! a magical influence everywhere,
Look how the liberal and transfiguring air
Washes this inn of memorable meetings,

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

This centre of ravishments and gracious greetings,
Till, through its jocund loveliness of length
A tidal-race of lust from shore to shore,
A brimming reach of beauty met with strength,
It shines and sounds like some miraculous dream,
Some vision multitudinous and agleam,
Of happiness as it shall be evermore !

Praise God for giving
Through this His messenger among the days
His word the life He gave is thrice-worth living !
For Pan, the bountiful, imperious Pan—
Not dead, not dead, as impotent dreamers feigned,
But the gay genius of a million Mays
Renewing his beneficent endeavour !—
Still reigns and triumphs, as he hath triumphed
and reigned

Since in the dim blue dawn of time
The universal ebb-and-flow began,
To sound his ancient music, and prevails,
By the persuasion of his mighty rhyme,
Here in this radiant and immortal street
Lavishly and omnipotently as ever
In the open hills, the undissembling dales,
The laughing-places of the juvenile earth.
For lo ! the wills of man and woman meet,
Meet and are moved, each unto each endeared,
As once in Eden's prodigal bowers befell,
To share his shameless, elemental mirth
In one great act of faith : while deep and strong,
Incomparably nerved and cheered,
The enormous heart of London joys to beat
To the measures of his rough majestic song ;

LONDON VOLUNTARIES

The lewd, perennial, overmastering spell
That keeps the rolling universe ensphered,
And life, and all for which life lives to long,
Wanton and wondrous and for ever well.

LONDON TYPES

(T^o S. S. P.)



I

'BUS-DRIVER

HE's called *The General* from the brazen craft
 And dash with which he *sneaks a bit of road*
 And all its fares ; challenged, or chafed, or
 chaffed,

Back-answers of the newest he'll explode ;
 He reins his horses with an air ; he treats
 With scoffing calm whatever powers there be ;
 He *gets it straight*, puts *a bit on*, and meets
 His losses with both *lip* and *£ s. d.* ;
 He arrogates a special taste in *short* ;
 Is loftily grateful for a flagrant *smoke* ;
 At all the smarter housemaids winks his court,
 And taps them for half-crowns ; being *stoney-broke*,
 Lives lustily ; is ever *on the make* ;
 And hath, I fear, none other gods but *Fake*.

II

LIFE-GUARDSMAN

Joy of the Milliner, Envy of the Line,
 Star of the Parks, jack-booted, sworded, helmed,
 He sits between his holsters, solid of spine ;

LONDON TYPES

Nor, as it seems, though Westminster were
 whelmed,
With the great globe, in earthquake and eclipse,
Would he and his charger cease from mounting
 guard,
This Private in the Blues, nor would his lips
Move, though his gorge with throttled oaths were
 charred !
He wears his inches weightily, as he wears
His old-world armours; and with his port and pride,
His sturdy graces and enormous airs,
He towers, in speech his Colonel countrified,
 A triumph, waxing statelier year by year,
 Of British blood, and bone, and beef, and beer.

III

HAWKER

FAR out of bounds he's figured—in a race
Of West-End traffic pitching to his loss.
But if you'd see him in his proper place,
Making the *browns* for *bub* and *grub* and *doss*,
Go East among the merchants and their men,
And where the press is noisiest, and the tides
Of trade run highest and widest, there and then
You shall behold him, edging with equal strides
Along the kerb ; hawking in either hand
Some artful nothing made of twine and tin,
Cardboard and foil and bits of rubber band :
Some penn'orth of wit-in-fact that, with a grin,
 The careful City marvels at, and buys
 For nurselings in the Suburbs to despise !

LONDON TYPES

IV

BEEF-EATER

HIS beat lies knee-high through a dust of story—
A dust of terror and torture, grief and crime ;
Ghosts that are England's wonder, and shame,
 and glory
Throng where he walks, an antic of old time ;
A sense of long immedicable tears
Were ever with him, could his ears but heed ;
The stern *Hic Jacets* of our bloodiest years
Are for his reading, had he eyes to read,
But here, where Crookback raged, and Cranmer
 trimmed,
And More and Strafford faced the axe's proving,
He shows that Crown the desperate Colonel
 nimmed,
Or simply keeps the Country Cousin moving,
 Or stays such Cockney pencillers as would
 shame
The wall where some dead Queen hath traced
 her name.

V

SANDWICH-MAN

AN ill March noon; the flagstones gray with dust;
An all-round east wind volleying straws and grit ;
St. Martin's Steps, where every venomous gust
Lingers to buffet, or sneap, the passing cit ;

LONDON TYPES

And in the gutter, squelching a rotten boot,
Draped in a wrap that, modish ten-year syne,
Partners, obscene with sweat and grease and soot,
A horrible hat, that once was just as fine ;
The drunkard's mouth a-wash for something
 drinkable,
The drunkard's eye alert for casual *toppers*,
The drunkard's neck stooped to a lot scarce
 thinkable,
A living, crawling blazoning of Hot-Coppers,
 He trails his mildews towards a Kingdom-
 Come
 Compact of *sausage-and-mash* and *two-o'-rum* !

VI

'LIZA

'Liza's *old man*'s perhaps a little *shady*,
'Liza's *old woman*'s prone to *booze* and cringe ;
But 'Liza deems herself a *perfect lady*,
And proves it in her feathers and her fringe.
For 'Liza has a *bloke* her heart to cheer,
With *pearlies* and a *barrer* and a *jack*,
So all the vegetables of the year
Are duly represented on her back.
Her boots are sacrifices to her hats,
Which knock you speechless—*like a load of*
 bricks !
Her summer velvets dazzle Wanstead Flats,
And cost, at times, a good eighteen-and-six.
 Withal, outside the gay and giddy whirl,
 'Liza's a stupid, straight, hard-working girl.

LONDON TYPES

VII

'LADY'

TIME, the old humourist, has a trick to-day
Of moving landmarks and of levelling down,
Till into 'Town the Suburbs edge their way,
And in the Suburbs you may scent the 'Town.
With Mount St. thus approaching Muswell Hill,
And Clapham Common marching with the Mile,
You get a Hammersmith that *fills the bill*,
A Hampstead with a serious sense of style.
So this fair creature, pictured in The Row,
As one of that 'gay adulterous world,'¹ whose
round

Is by the Serpentine, as well would show,
And might, I deem, as readily be found
On Streatham's Hill, or Wimbledon's, or
where
Brixtonian kitchens lard the late-dining air.

¹ Wilfrid Blunt.

VIII

BLUECOAT BOY

So went our boys when Edward Sixth, the King,
Chartered Christ's Hospital, and died. And so
Full fifteen generations in a string
Of heirs to his bequest have had to go.

LONDON TYPES

Thus Camden showed, and Barnes, and Stilling-
fleet,
And Richardson, that bade our Lovelace be ;
The little Elia thus in Newgate Street ;
Thus to his Genevieve young S. T. C.
With thousands else that, wandering up and down,
Quaint, privileged, liked and reputed well,
Made the great School a part of London Town
Patent as Paul's and vital as Bow Bell :
The old School nearing exile, day by day,
To certain clay-lands somewhere Horsham way.

IX

MOUNTED POLICE

ARMY Reserve ; a worshipper of Bobs,
With whom he stripped the smock from Can-
dahar ;
Neat as his mount, that neatest among cobs ;
Whenever pageants pass, or meetings are,
He moves conspicuous, vigilant, severe,
With his Light Cavalry hand and seat and look,
A living type of Order, in whose sphere
Is room for neither *Hooligan* nor *Hook*.
For in his shadow, wheresoe'er he ride,
Paces, all eye and hardihood and grip,
The dreaded *Crusher*, might in his every stride
And right materialized girt at his hip ;
And they, that shake to see these twain go by,
Feel that the *Tec*, that plain-clothes Terror, is
nigh.

LONDON TYPES

x

NEWS-BOY

TAKE any station, pavement, circus, corner,
Where men their styles of print may call or
choose,

And there—ten times more *on it* than Jack
Horner—

There shall you find him swathed in sheets of
news.

Nothing can stay the placing of his wares—
Not 'bus, nor cab, nor dray ! The very *Slop*,
That imp of power, is powerless ! Ever he
dares,

And, daring, lands his public neck and crop.

Even the many-tortured London ear,
The much-enduring, loathes his *Speeshul* yell,
His shriek of *Winnur* ! But his dart and leer
And poise are irresistible. Pall Mall

Joys in him, and Mile End ; for his vocation
Is to purvey the stuff of conversation.

xi

DRUM-MAJOR

WHO says *Drum-Major* says a man of mould,
Shaking the meek earth with tremendous tread,
And pacing still, a triumph to behold,
Of his own spine at least two yards ahead !

LONDON TYPES

Attorney, grocer, surgeon, broker, duke—
His calling may be anything, who comes
Into a room, his presence a rebuke
To the dejected, as the pipes and drums
Inspired his port !—who mounts his office stairs
As though he led great armies to the fight !
His bulk itself's pure genius, and he wears
His avoirdupois with so much fire and spright
That, though the creature stands but five feet
five,
You take him for the tallest He alive.

XII

FLOWER-GIRL

THERE'S never a delicate nurseling of the year
But our huge London hails it, and delights
To wear it on her breast or at her ear,
Her days to colour and make sweet her nights.
Crocus and daffodil and violet,
Pink, primrose, valley-lily, clove-carnation,
Red rose and white rose, wall-flower, mignonette,
The daisies all—these be her recreation,
Her gaudies these ! And forth from Drury
Lane,
Trapesing in any of her whirl of weathers,
Her flower-girls foot it, honest and hoarse and
vain,
All boot and little shawl and wilted feathers :
Of populous corners right advantage taking,
And, where they squat, endlessly posy-making.

LONDON TYPES

XIII

BARMAID

THOUGH, if you ask her name, she says Elise,
Being plain Elizabeth, e'en let it pass,
And own that, if her aspirates take their ease,
She ever makes a point, in washing glass,
Handling the engine, turning taps for *tots*,
And countering change, and scorning what men
say,

Of posing as a dove among the pots,
Nor often gives her dignity away.
Her head's a work of art, and, if her eyes
Be tired and ignorant, she has a waist ;
Cheaply the Mode she shadows ; and she tries
From penny novels to amend her taste ;
And, having mopped the zinc for certain years,
And faced the gas, she fades and disappears.

*The Artist muses at his ease,
Contented that his work is done,
And smiling—smiling!—as he sees
His crowd collecting, one by one.
Alas! his travail's but begun!
None, none can keep the years in line,
And what to Ninety-Eight is fun
May raise the gorge of Ninety-Nine!*

MUSWELL HILL, 1898.

THREE PROLOGUES



BEAU AUSTIN

*By W. E. Henley and R. L. Stevenson,
Haymarket Theatre, November 3, 1890.*

Spoken by Mr. TREE in the character of Beau Austin.

‘ To all and singular,’ as Dryden says,
We bring a fancy of those Georgian days,
Whose style still breathed a faint and fine per-
fume

Of old-world courtliness and old-world bloom :
When speech was elegant and talk was fit,
For slang had not been canonised as wit ;
When manners reigned, when breeding had the
wall,

And Women—yes !—were ladies first of all ;
When Grace was conscious of its gracefulness,
And man—though Man !—was not ashamed to
dress.

A brave formality, a measured ease
Were his—and hers—whose effort was to please.
And to excel in pleasing was to reign,
And, if you sighed, never to sigh in vain.

But then, as now—it may be, something more—
Woman and man were human to the core.

THREE PROLOGUES

The hearts that throbbed behind that brave attire
Burned with a plenitude of essential fire.
They too could risk, they also could rebel :
They could love wisely—they could love too well.
In that great duel of Sex, that ancient strife
Which is the very central fact of life,
They could—and did—engage it breath for
 breath,
They could—and did—get wounded unto death.
As at all times since time for us began
Woman was truly woman, man was man,
And joy and sorrow were as much at home
In trifling Tunbridge as in mighty Rome.

Dead—dead and done with ! Swift from shine
 to shade

The roaring generations flit and fade.
To this one, fading, flitting, like the rest,
We come to proffer—be it worst or best—
A sketch, a shadow, of one brave old time ;
A hint of what it might have held sublime ;
A dream, an idyll, call it what you will,
Of man still Man, and woman—Woman still !

II

RICHARD SAVAGE

*By J. M. Barrie and H. B. Marriott Watson,
Criterion Theatre, April 16, 1891.*

To other boards for pun and song and dance !
Our purpose is an essay in romance :
An old-world story where such old-world facts

RICHARD SAVAGE

As hate and love and death, through four swift
acts—

Not without gleams and glances, hints and cues,
From the dear bright eyes of the Comic Muse !—
So shine and sound that, as we fondly deem,
They may persuade you to accept our dream :
Our own invention, mainly—though we take,
Somewhat for art but most for interest's sake
One for our hero who goes wandering still
In the long shadow of Parnassus Hill ;
Scarce within eyeshot ; but his tragic shade
Compels that recognition due be made,
When he comes knocking at the student's door,
Something as poet, if as blackguard more.

Poet and blackguard. Of the first—how
much ?

As to the second, in quite perfect touch
With folly and sorrow, even shame and crime,
He lived the grief and wonder of his time !
Marked for reproaches from his life's beginning ;
Extremely sinned against as well as sinning ;
Hack, spendthrift, starveling, duellist in turn ;
Too cross to cherish yet too fierce to spurn ;
Begrimed with ink or brave with wine and blood ;
Spirit of fire and manikin of mud ;
Now shining clear, now fain to starve and skulk ;
Star of the cellar, pensioner of the bulk ;
At once the child of passion and the slave ;
Brawling his way to an unhonoured grave—
That was Dick Savage ! Yet, ere his ghost we
raise

For these more decent and less desperate days,

THREE PROLOGUES

It may be well and seemly to reflect
That, howbeit of so prodigal a sect,
Since it was his to call until the end
Our greatest, wisest Englishman his friend,
'Twere all-too fatuous if we cursed and scorned
The strange, wild creature Johnson loved and
mourned.

Nature is but the oyster—Art's the pearl :
Our Dick is neither sycophant nor churl.
Not as he was but as he might have been
Had the Unkind Gods been poets of the scene,
Fired with our fancy, shaped and tricked anew
To touch your hearts with love, your eyes with rue,
He stands or falls, ere he these boards depart,
Not as dead Nature but as living Art.

III

ADMIRAL GUINEA

*By W. E. Henley and R. L. Stevenson,
Avenue Theatre, Monday, November 29, 1897.*

Spoken by Miss ELIZABETH ROBINS.

ONCE was an Age, an Age of blood and gold,
An Age of shipmen scoundrelly and bold—
Blackbeard and Avery, Singleton, Roberts, Kidd :
An Age which seemed, the while it rolled its quid,
Brave with adventure and doubloons and crime,
Rum and the Ebony Trade: when, time on time,
Real Pirates, right Sea-Highwaymen, could mock
The carrion strung at Execution Dock ;

ADMIRAL GUINEA

And the trim Slaver, with her raking rig,
Her cloud of sails, her spars superb and trig,
Held, in a villainous ecstasy of gain,
Her musky course from Benin to the Main,
And back again for niggers:

When, in fine,
Some thought that Eden bloomed across the Line,
And some, like Cowper's Newton, lived to tell
That through those parallels ran the road to Hell.

Once was a pair of Friends, who loved to
chance

Their feet in any by-way of Romance :
They, like two vagabond schoolboys, unafraid
Of stark impossibilities, essayed
To make these Penitent and Impenitent Thieves,
These Pews and Gaunts, each man of them with
his sheaves

Of humour, passion, cruelty, tyranny, life,
Fit shadows for the boards ; till in the strife
Of dream with dream, their Slaver-Saint came true,
And their Blind Pirate, their resurgent Pew
(A figure of deadly farce in his new birth),
Tap-tapped his way from Orcus back to earth ;
And so, their Lover and his Lass made one,
In their best prose this *Admiral* here was done.

One of this Pair sleeps till the crack of doom
Where the great ocean-rollers plunge and boom :
The other waits and wonders what his Friend,
Dead now, and deaf, and silent, were the end **E**
Revealed to his rare spirit, would find to say
If you, his lovers, loved him for this Play.



FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

Verses and Songs in Time of War

This land of such dear souls, this dear dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world.

SHAKESPEARE.

I. M.

FREDERICK HUGH SHERSTON ROBERTS, V.C.

LIEUTENANT, KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS

(*Simla 8th January 1872 : Chieveley Camp 16th December 1899*)

AND THE MANY VALIANT SOULS
WHOSE PASSING FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE
HAS THRILLED THE ENDS OF THE WORLD
WITH PAIN AND PRIDE

June 1900.

PROLOGUE

WHEN the wind storms by with a shout, and the
stern sea caves

Rejoice in the tramp and the roar of onsetting
waves,

Then, then it comes home to the heart that the
top of life

Is the passion that burns the blood in the act of
strife—

Till you pity the dead down there in their quiet
graves.

But to drowse with the fen behind and the fog
before,

When the rain-rot spreads, and a tame sea mum-
bles the shore,

Not to adventure, none to fight, no right and
no wrong,

Sons of the Sword heart-sick for a stave of your
sire's old song—

O, you envy the blessed dead that can live no
more !

March 1891.

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

I

REMONSTRANCE

HITCH, blunder, check—
Each is *a new disaster*,
And it is who shall bleat and scrawl
The feebler and the faster.
Where is our ancient pride of heart ?
Our faith in blood and star ?
Who but would marvel how we came
If this were all we are ?

Ours is the race
That tore the Spaniard's ruff,
That flung the Dutchman by the breech,
The Frenchman by the scruff;
Through his diurnal round of dawns
Our drum-tap squires the sun;
And yet, an old mad burgher-man
Can put us on the run !

Rise, England, rise !
But in that calm of pride,
That hardy and high serenity,
That none may dare abide;
So front the realms, your point abashed;
So mark them chafe and foam;
And, if they challenge, so, by God,
Strike, England, and strike home!

December 1899.

THE MAN IN THE STREET

II

THE MAN IN THE STREET

' DEATH in the right cause, death in the wrong
cause, trumpets of victory, groans of defeat ':
Yes ; and it's better to go for the Abbey than
chuck your old bones out in the street.

Life is a march and a battle (there's some of us
make it a kind of review) ;
But how if you never get out on parade, and
there's not any fighting to do ?

Hands in your pockets, eyes on the pavement,
where in the world is the fun of it all ?
But a row—but a rush—but a face for your fist.
Then a crash through the dark—and a fall ;

And they carry you—where ? Does it matter
a straw ? You can look at them out of your
pride ;

For you've had your will of a new front door,
and your foot on the mat inside.

In fact, you've done a pitch for yourself, and it
seems, but it isn't, a parcel of stuff,
For nobody knows, nor looks your way, nor cares
—but *you* know, and that's enough.

' Death in the wrong cause, death in the right ' :
O, it's plain as a last year's comic song !
For the thing is, give us a *cause*, and we'll risk
our skins for it, cheerfully, right or wrong.

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

And if, please God, it's the Rag of Rags, that
sends us roaring into the fight,
O, we'll go in a glory, dead certain sure that
we're utterly bound to be right !

October 1892.

III

PRO REGE NOSTRO

WHAT have I done for you,
England, my England ?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own ?
With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
As the song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the world on your bugles blown !

Where shall the watchful Sun,
England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
England, my own ?
When shall he rejoice agen
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Down the years on your bugles blown ?

Ever the faith endures,
England, my England :—

PRO REGE NOSTRO

' Take and break us : we are yours,
England, my own !
Life is good, and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky :
Death is death ; but we shall die
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
To the stars on your bugles blown ! '

They call you proud and hard,
England, my England :
You with worlds to watch and ward,
England, my own !
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies,
You could know nor dread nor ease,
Were the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the Pit on your bugles blown !

Mother of Ships whose might,
England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's delight,
England, my own,
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient Sword,
There's the menace of the Word
In the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Out of heaven on your bugles blown !

January 1892.

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

IV

THE LEVY OF SHIELDS

EDWARD the Prince, here in Canterbury Minster,
Between his deathless Victories, under his
triumphing shield,

Sleeps these five hundred years,
Like his archers of Poitiers—

O, the dear, immortal Namelesses of that trans-
cending field !

And out in the working world, out in Canterbury
Barracks,

You hear the drums of England beat, the bugle
of England blow

Notes of empery that break

Like a song for England's sake

On your dream of the mighty captain that had
led you long ago.

Yet, if he pass, in his Canterbury Chapel,
The mortal part of him a strew of venerable dust,
With John Chandos and his peers,

And the armours of Poitiers,

Still he and his valiant lieges are as fire upon
their trust ;

For—O, the dreadful English drums, the rending
English bugles !—

South, and West, and North, and East, on all
the winds that blow

Round the quarterings on the card,

Greatly willing, hurrying hard,

Storms the soul of the Black Prince with all the
fury of long ago.

March 1900.

MUSIC HALL

v

MUSIC HALL

(OLD BURDEN)

Storm along, John ! Though you faltered at first,
Caught in an ambush, and held to the worst,
All the old Counties were hard on the spot,
For they hadn't a son but rejoiced in his lot.
You had only to cart 'em some thousands of
miles ;

So you fell to your work with the calmest of
smiles,

And, each with her battles, your ships you sent on,
Till you beggared the record—Hi ! *Storm along,*
John !

Storm along, John ! Storm along, John !
Frenchman and Russian and Dutchman and
Don

Know the seas yours from the Coast to Canton !
Storm along, storm along, storm along, John !

Storm along, John ! There was work to be
done

With a foe in full blast ere you'd sighted a
gun !

Came, the news came, that you reeled in the
brunt,

And at home, in a flash, it was ' Who's for the
front ? '

And your whelps overseas, John—the whelps
that you knew

For the native, original pattern true-blue—

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

O, your whelps wanted blooding, they cried to
come on,

And—Hark to them chorusing :—‘ Storm along,
John ! ’

*Storm along, John ! Storm along, John !
Half the world's yours, and the rest may look on,
Mum, at the rip from Quebec to Ceylon . . .
Storm along, storm along, storm along, John !*

Storm along, John ! All your Britains are out :
Melbourne and Sydney got up with a shout ;
Wellington, Ottawa, Brisbane, their best
Send, with Cape Town and the riding Nor'-
West.

Horses, men, guns for you ! India's aflame !
How the lads of Natal have been playing the game !
From Gib to Vancouver, from Thames to Yukon,
The live air is loud with you—*Storm along, John !*

*Storm along, John ! Storm along, John !
Not in the best of the years that are gone
Has the star which is yours thus tremendously
shone !*

Storm along, storm along, storm along, John !

January 1900.

VI

A NEW SONG TO AN OLD TUNE

Sons of Shannon, Tamar, Trent,
Men of the Lothians, men of Kent,
Essex, Wessex, shore and shire,
Mates of the net, the mine, the fire,

A NEW SONG TO AN OLD TUNE

Lads of desk and wheel and loom,
Noble and trader, squire and groom,
Come where the bugles of England play,
Over the hills and far away !

Southern Cross and Polar Star—
Here are the Britains bred afar ;
Serry, O serry them, fierce and keen,
Under the flag of the Empress-Queen ;
Shoulder to shoulder down the track,
Where, to the unretreating Jack,
The victor bugles of England play
Over the hills and far away !

What if the best of our wages be
An empty sleeve, a stiff-set knee,
A crutch for the rest of life—who cares,
So long as the One Flag floats and dares ?
So long as the One Race dares and grows ?
Death—what is death but God's own rose ?
Let but the bugles of England play
Over the hills and far away !

March 1900.

VII

' OUR CHIEF OF MEN '

DID he say to himself, did he say at the start :—
 ' I 'll take this thing in hand,
And in England's name, for a dead boy's sake,
 I 'll make them understand.

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

' They have given us war, good war so far as
their burgher souls knew how :
In a dead boy's name, and for England's sake,
I'll set my hand to the plow.

' They have beaten us, trapped us, foiled and
fouled, been with us like a disease,
But as yet they know but the best of the brew ;
they shall learn the taste of the lees ? '

Did he promise thus in the thought of his dead ?
We must do as we must—not will !
If he did, by the Lord he has kept his word, for
they've had of him thrice their fill.

By the dismal fords, the thankless hills, the deso-
late, half-dead flats
He has shepherded them like silly sheep, and
cornered them like rats.

He has driven and headed them strength by
strength, as a hunter deals with his deer,
And has filled the place of the heart in their
breast with a living devil of fear.

They have seen themselves out-marched, out-
fought, out-captained early and late.
They've scarce a decent town to their name but
he's ridden in at the gate.

Desert and distance, treason and drought, he has
mopped them up as he went,
And only those he must shed in the rush of his
swoops were discontent.

‘ A HEALTH UNTO HER MAJESTY ’

Patient, hardy, masterful, merciful, high, irresistible, just,
For a dead man’s sake, and in England’s name,
he has done as he would and must.

So three times three, and nine times nine, and a
hundred times and ten,
England, you, and you junior Englands, all, hats
off to our Chief of Men !

May 1900.

VIII

‘ A HEALTH UNTO HER MAJESTY ’

(MAY 24, 1900)

AUGUST in children, victories, years,
Grown venerable in storms of cheers,
Widow and Empress, friend and Queen,
Resolute, vigilant, careful, keen,
Ever as fire to find and take
The only way for your Kingdom’s sake,
True to your course as a star is true,
Here ’s to our sovereign—you, Ma’am, you !

You in whose life are shown in deed
All the high virtues of the breed,
All the high qualities of the blood,
Energy, patience, hardihood,
Strength in purpose, pride in strife,
Disdain of death and trust in life,
Heart to dare and resolve to do,
Here ’s to our England—you, Ma’am, you !

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

Maker of Armies, Builder of Ships,
Mother of Nations, on whose lips
The words, ' My People,' shining forth,
Set in one battle South and North,
In a glory of steel, with East and West,
To march and starve with a desperate zest,
And die in their boots, so they pull things
through,
Here 's to our Empire—you, Ma'am, you !

IX

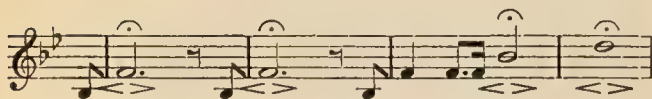
LAST POST

THE day's high work is over and done,
And these no more will need the sun :
Blow, you bugles of England, blow !
These are gone whither all must go,
Mightily gone from the field they won.
So in the workaday wear of battle,
Touched to glory with God's own red,
Bear we our chosen to their bed !
Settle them lovingly where they fell,
In that good lap they loved so well ;
And, their deliveries to the dear Lord said,
And the last desperate volleys ranged and
sped,
Blow, you bugles of England, blow,
Over the camps of her beaten foe—
Blow glory and pity to the victor Mother,
Sad, O sad in her sacrificial dead !

LAST POST

Labour, and love, and strife, and mirth,
They gave their part in this kindly earth—
Blow, you bugles of England, blow !—
That her Name as a sun among stars might
glow,
Till the dusk of time, with honour and
worth :
That, stung by the lust and the pain of
battle,
The One Race ever might starkly spread,
And the One Flag eagle it overhead !
In a rapture of wrath and faith and pride,
Thus they felt it, and thus they died ;
So to the Maker of homes, to the Giver of
bread,
For whose dear sake their triumphing souls
they shed,
Blow, you bugles of England, blow,
Though you break the heart of her beaten foe,
Glory and praise to the everlasting Mother,
Glory and peace to her lovely and faithful
dead !

April 1900.



FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

EPILOGUE

INTO a land
Storm-wrought, a place of quakes, all thunder-
scarred,
Helpless, degraded, desolate,
Peace, the White Angel, comes.
Her eyes are as a mother's. Her good hands
Are comforting, and helping ; and her voice
Falls on the heart, as, after Winter, Spring
Falls on the World, and there is no more pain.
And, in her influence, hope returns, and life,
And the passion of endeavour : so that, soon,
The idle ports are insolent with keels ;
The stithies roar, and the mills thrum
With energy and achievement ; weald and wold
Exult ; the cottage-garden teems
With innocent hues and odours ; boy and girl
Mate prosperously ; there are sweet women to
kiss ;
There are good women to breed. In a golden
fog,
A large, full-stomached faith in kindliness
All over the world, the nation, in a dream
Of money and love and sport, hangs at the paps
Of well-being, and so
Goes fattening, mellowing, dozing, rotting down
Into a rich deliquium of decay.

Then, if the Gods be good,
Then, if the Gods be other than mischievous,
Down from their footstools, down

EPILOGUE

With a million-throated shouting, swoops and
storms

War, the Red Angel, the Awakener,
The Shaker of Souls and Thrones ; and at her
heel

Trail grief, and ruin, and shame !

The woman weeps her man, the mother her son,

The tenderling its father. In wild hours,

A people, haggard with defeat,

Asks if there be a God ; yet sets its teeth,

Faces calamity, and goes into the fire

Another than it was. And in wild hours

A people, roaring ripe

With victory, rises, menaces, stands renewed,

Sheds its old piddling aims,

Approves its virtue, puts behind itself

The comfortable dream, and goes,

Armoured and militant,

New-pithed, new-souled, new-visioned, up the
steeps

To those great altitudes, whereat the weak

Live not. But only the strong

Have leave to strive, and suffer, and achieve.

WORTHING, 1901.

FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE

ENVOY

THESE to the glory and praise of the green land
That bred my women, and that holds my dead,
England, and with her the strong broods that
stand

Wherever her fighting lines are pushed or spread !
They call us proud ?—Look at our English Rose !
Shedders of blood ?—Where hath our own been
spared ?

Shopkeepers?—Our accompt the high God knows.
Close ?—In our bounty half the world hath
shared.

They hate us, and they envy ? Envy and hate
Should drive them to the Pit's edge ?—Be it so !
That race is damned which misesteems its fate,
And this, in God's good time, they all shall know,
And know you too, you good green England,
then—

Mother of mothering girls and governing men !

June 1900.

EPICEDIA



TWO DAYS

(February 15—September 28, 1894)

To V. G.

THAT day we brought our Beautiful One to lie
In the green peace within your gates, he came
To give us greeting, boyish and kind and shy,
And, stricken as we were, we blessed his name :
Yet, like the Creature of Light that had been
ours,

Soon of the sweet Earth disinherited,
He too must join, even with the Year's old
flowers,

The unanswering generations of the Dead.
So stand we friends for you, who stood our friend
Through him that day ; for now through him
you know

That though where love was, love is till the end,
Love, turned of death to longing, like a foe,
Strikes : when the ruined heart goes forth to
crave

Mercy of the high, austere, unpitying Grave.

EPICEDIA

IN MEMORIAM

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

(Ob. October 30, 1897)

HE looked half-parson and half-skipper : a quaint,
Beautiful blend, with blue eyes good to see,
And old-world whiskers. You found him cynic,
saint,
Salt, humourist, Christian, poet ; with a free,
Far-glancing, luminous utterance ; and a heart
Large as St. Francis's : withal a brain
Stored with experience, letters, fancy, art,
And scored with runes of human joy and pain.
Till six-and-sixty years he used his gift,
His gift unparalleled, of laughter and tears,
And left the world a high-piled, golden drift
Of verse : to grow more golden with the years,
Till the Great Silence fallen upon his ways
Break into song, and he that had Love have
Praise.

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE WARRINGTON STEEVENS

London, December 10, 1869.

Ladysmith, January 15, 1900.

WE cheered you forth—brilliant and kind and brave.
Under your country's triumphing flag you fell.
It floats, true Heart, over no dearer grave—
Brave and brilliant and kind, hail and farewell !

REGINAE DILECTISSIMAE VICTORIAE

IN MEMORIAM

REGINAE DILECTISSIMAE VICTORIAE

(May 24, 1819—January 22, 1901)

*Sceptre and orb and crown,
High ensigns of a sovranity containing
The beauty and strength and state of half a World,
Pass from her, and she fades
Into the old, inviolable peace.*

I

She had been ours so long
She seemed a piece of England : spirit and blood
And message England's self,
Home-coloured, England in look and deed and
dream ;
Like the rich meadows and woods, the serene
rivers,
And sea-charmed cliffs and beaches, that still
bring
A rush of tender pride to the heart
That beats in England's airs to England's ends :
August, familiar, irremovable,
Like the good stars that shine
In the good skies that only England knows :
So that we held it sure
God's aim, God's will, God's way,
When Empire from her footstool, realm on realm,
Spread, even as from her notable womb
Sprang line on line of Kings ;
For she was England—England and our Queen.

EPICEDIA

II

O, she was ours ! And she had aimed
And known and done the best
And highest in time : greatly rejoiced,
Ruled greatly, greatly endured. Love had been
hers,
And widowhood, glory and grief, increase .
In wisdom and power and pride,
Dominion, honour, children, reverence :
So that, in peace and war
Innumerable victorious, she lay down
To die in a world renewed,
Cleared, in her luminous umbrage beautified
For Man, and changing fast
Into so gracious an inheritance
As Man had never dared
Imagine. Think, when she passed,
Think what a pageant of immortal acts,
Done in the unapproachable face
Of Time by the high, transcending human mind,
Shone and acclaimed
And triumphed in her advent ! Think of the
ghosts,
Think of the mighty ghosts : soldiers and priests,
Artists and captains of discovery,
God's chosen, His adventurers up the heights
Of thought and deed—how many of them that led
The forlorn hopes of the World !—
Her peers and servants, made the air
Of her death-chamber glorious ! Think how
they thronged
About her bed, and with what pride

REGINAE DILECTISSIMAE VICTORIAE

They took this sister-ghost
Tenderly into the night ! O, think—
And, thinking, bow the head
In sorrow, but in the reverence that makes
The strong man stronger—this true maid,
True wife, true mother, tried and found
An hundred times true steel,
This unforgettable woman was your Queen !

III

Tears for her—tears ! Tears and the mighty
rites

Of an everlasting and immense farewell,
England, green heart of the world, and you,
Dear demi-Englands, far-away isles of home,
Where the old speech is native, and the old flag
Floats, and the old irresistible call,
The watch-word of so many ages of years,
Makes men in love
With toil for the race, and pain, and peril, and
death !

Tears, and the dread, tremendous dirge
Of her brooding battleships, and hosts
Processional, with trailing arms ; the plaint—
Measured, enormous, terrible—of her guns ;
The slow, heart-breaking throb
Of bells ; the trouble of drums ; the blare
Of mourning trumpets ; the discomfiting pomp
Of silent crowds, black streets, and banners-royal
Obsequious ! Then, these high things done,
Rise, heartened of your passion ! Rise to the
height

EPICEDIA

Of her so lofty life ! Kneel, if you must ;
But, kneeling, win to those great altitudes
On which she sought and did
Her clear, supernal errand unperturbed !
Let the new memory
Be as the old, long love ! So, when the hour
Strikes, as it must, for valour of heart,
Virtue, and patience, and unblenching hope,
And the inflexible resolve
That, come the World in arms,
This breeder of nations, England, keeping the
 seas
Hers as from God, shall in the sight of God
Stand justified of herself
Wherever her unretreating bugles blow !
Remember that she lived
That this magnificent Power might still per-
 dure—
Your friend, your passionate servant, counsellor,
 Queen.

IV

Be that your chief of mourning—that !—
England, O Mother, and you,
The daughter Kingdoms born and reared
Of England's travail and sweet blood ;
And never will you lands,
The live Earth over and round,
Wherethrough for sixty royal and radiant years
Her drum-tap made the dawns
English—Never will you
So fittingly and well have paid your debt

REGINAE DILECTISSIMAE VICTORIAE

Of grief and gratitude to the souls
That sink in England's harness into the dream :
' I die for England's sake, and it is well ' :
As now to this valiant, wonderful piece of earth,
To which the assembling nations bare the head,
And bend the knee,
In absolute veneration—once your Queen.

*Sceptre and orb and crown,
High ensigns of a sovranity empaling
The glory and love and praise of a whole half-world,
Fall from her, and, preceding, she departs
Into the old, indissoluble Peace.*

A SONG OF SPEED

(*To* Alfred Harmsworth)

Now there is nothing gives a man such spirit,
Leaving his blood as cayenne doth a curry,
As going at full speed. . . .

What a delightful thing 's a turn-pike road !
So smooth, so level, such a means of shaving
The Earth as scarce the Eagle in the broad
Air can accomplish. . . .

BYRON.

A SONG OF SPEED

A SONG OF SPEED

*In the Eye of the Lord,
By the Will of the Lord,
Out of the infinite
Bounty dissembled,
Since Time began,
In the Hand of the Lord,
Speed !*

Speed as a chattel :
Speed in your daily
Account and economy ;
One with your wines,
And your books, and your bath—
Speed !

Speed as a rapture :
An integral element
In the new scheme of Life
Which the good Lord, the Master,
Wills well you should frame
In the light of His laugh
And His great, His ungrudging,
His reasoned benevolence—
Speed !

Speed, and the range of God's skies,
Distances, changes, surprises ;
Speed, and the hug of God's winds
And the play of God's airs,
Beautiful, whimsical, wonderful ;
Clean, fierce and clean,
With a thrust in the throat

A SONG OF SPEED

And a rush at the nostrils ;
Keen, with a far-away
Taste of inhuman
Unviolable Vasts,
Where the Stars of the Morning
Go singing together
For joy in the dazzling,
Naked, unvisited
Emperies of Space !
And the heart in your breast
Sings, as the World
Slips past like a dream
Of Speed—
Speed on the Knees of the Lord.

Speed—
Speed, and a world of new havings :
Red-rushing splendours
Of Dawn ; the disturbing,
Long-drawn, tumultuous
Passions of Sunset ;
And, these twain between,
The desperate, great anarchies,
The matchless serenitudes,
The magical, ravishing,
Changing, transforming
Trances of Daylight.
Speed, and the lap
Of the Land that you know
For the first time (it seems),
As you push through the maze
Of her beauties and privacies,
Terrors, astonishments :

A SONG OF SPEED

Heath, common, pinewood,
Downland and river-scape,
Cherry-orchards, water-meads,
Forests and stubbles,
Oak-temples, daisy-spreads,
Vistas of harebell,
Hills of the ruggedest,
Vales of the comeliest ;
Barrows and cromlechs,
Ancestral ossuaries,
Whence (you may fancy)
The troubled gray ghosts
Of your forefathers peer,
As you swoop down on them,
With a wild, wondering
Pride in their seed ;
Placid and sylvan,
Stray churchyards that, falling
Into the village-streets,
Keep the poor living
Still in a reverent
And kindly communion
With their familiar
And passioning dead ;
Brooks with fat, comforting,
Sociable sallows
Fenced, and still, sleepy-faced
Lengths of Canal,
Where the one thing alive
Is the horse on the two-path,
Tugging in dreams
At the long barge that hangs
Like a dream on his collar ;

A SONG OF SPEED

Secular avenues,
Noble alignments
Of Elms, since a century
Hailing the Dawns
And exalting the Sunsets ;
Beech-woods that burn out
The life in their leafage,
And figure the death
Of the Year in a glory
Of colour and fire ;
Roads, where the stalwart
Soldier of Cæsar
Put by his bread
And his garlic, and, girding
His conquering sword
To his unconquered thigh,
Lay down in his armour,
And went to his Gods
By the way that he'd made.
Then the miraculous
Pageant that shows
How this Earth of our loves
And our dreams and our dead
Presses unwitting
Back to the sunless,
Unsouled, disfeatured
Filth of the Prime :
Brilliant, enchanting
Visions of Summer,
Somnolent, stately,
Gravid and satisfied ;
And Autumn, his hands
Full of apples ; and Winter,

A SONG OF SPEED

The old Tyrant we love
For the sake of his kinswoman,
Spring with her violets,
Spring with her lambs,
Spring with her old,
Irresistible mandate,
The joyous, the reckless
Compeller of Wombs,
Spring ! And with these
Smoke, Rain, and Mist
In their subtle, fantastical
Moodiness ; Gardens
And Woods in their pleasure,
Their pride of increase,
And their helpless and sorrowful
Pomp of decay !
Last, the gray Sea,
The Antient of Days,
With his secret as new
After thousands of years
As it was to the old,
The alert, aboriginal
Father of Ships ;
And Speed !
Speed you conjure
With a crook of your finger ;
Speed which your touch
On a core, on a master-bit,
Breeds for your use ;
As Man's hand on a tiller
Gives brain to a boat ;
As Man's hand on a pen
Turns the poor, workaday

A SONG OF SPEED

Labourers of language
Straight into insolent,
High, living Song ;
Speed—
Speed in the Lap of the Lord !

Trim, naked Speed !
Speed, and a victory
Snatched in the teeth
Of the Masters of Darkness.
For the antient, invincible
Spirit of Man,
Stern-set, adventurous,
Dreaming things, doing things ;
Strong with a strength
Won from tremendous
And desperate vicissitudes,
Out of unnumbered,
Unstoried experiences ;
Fighting the one fight,
The last and the best fight,
Hard, and by inchmeal
Winning it steadily,
Corner by corner,
Here a snatch, there a bit,
Over the black, irresistible
Legions of Death,
The impassive, unfaltering
Captains and Companies
Of the primordial
Powers of the Princedoms
And Thrones of the Grave
Strongly and sternly

A SONG OF SPEED

Asserts and approves itself,
Mightily turns
To its task of attesting
Its right to a figment,
A shadow of Deity,
Full in the Face of the Lord.

For the Heart of Man
Tears at Man's destiny
Ever ; and ever
Makes what it may
Of his wretched occasions,
His infinitesimal
Portion in Time,
His merely incomputable
Shred of Eternity,
His ninety-ninth part,
If you count by God's clock,
Of a second on Earth
In the lust and the pride
Of God's garment, the Flesh.
So Woman and War,
And the Child (the unspeakable
Promise and proof
Of a right immortality),
Learning and Drink,
And Money and Song,
Ships, Folios, and Horses,
The craft of the Healer,
The worship of God
And things done to the instant
Delight of the Devil,
And all, all that tends

A SONG OF SPEED

To his hard-to-come, swift-to-go
Glory, are tested,
Gutted, exhausted,
Chucked down the draught ;
And the quest, the pursuit,
The attack and the conquest,
Of the Unknown goes on—
Goes on in the Joy of the Lord.

For, beaten in Time
From the start to the finish,
So utterly beaten
Appeal is impossible,
The Spirit of Man,
Enquiring, aspiring ;
Passionately scaling
Ice-bitten altitudes,
Neighbourhood of none
Save the austere,
Unapproachable Stars ;
Scapes from its destiny,
Holds on its course
Of attent and discovery,
So as to leave,
When the Lord takes it back to Him,
The lot of the World
Something the prouder,
Something the loftier,
Something the braver,
For that it hath done :
Something the good man,
The wise man, the strong man,
Poet or Soldier,

A SONG OF SPEED

Maker of Empires
Or Broker of Diamonds,
Preacher or Surgeon,
Or the inventor :
Artist in elements,
Expert in substances,
Strengths, frangibilities,
Points of combustion,
Points of resistance :
These, and an hundred,
A thousand besides
Of the right, the authentic
Talon and pinion,
Snapping up in a flash
After years of endeavour
One of God's messages,
Do to Man's solacing,
Pride, and magnificence,
Under the Feet of the Lord.

Hence the Mercédes !
Look at her. Shapeless ?
Unhandsome ? Unpaintable ?
Yes ; but the strength
Of some seventy-five horses :
Seventy-five puissant,
Superb fellow-creatures :
Is summed and contained
In her pipes and her cylinders.
Mind after mind,
On fire with discovery,
Filled full with the fruits
Of an hundred fat years,

A SONG OF SPEED

And mad with the dreams
And desires of To-Day,
Have toiled themselves dull
To achieve her components.
She can stop in a foot's length ;
She steers as it were
With a hair you might pluck
From your Mistress's nape ;
She crawls, if you please
So to lightly her virtue,
At your Mistress's pace
When she goes for a stroll,
Which is partly on Earth
And partly, She dreaming
Of You, in broad Heaven.
Yet ask but a sign,
But a proof of her quality,
Handle her valves,
Her essentials, her secrets,
And she runs down the birds
(You can catch them like flies
As, poor wretches, they race from you !);
Ay, and becomes,
As the Spirit and Mind
Of God's nearest approach
To Himself hath so willed it,
The Angel of Speed—
Speed in the Laugh of the Lord.

There be good things,
Good things innumerable,
Held like an alms
In the clutch of the Master ;

A SONG OF SPEED

And at times, when He feels
That His creatures are doing
Their best to assert
Their part in His dream,
He loosens His fist
And a miracle slips from it
Into the hands
Of His adepts and servants.
Thus, in late years,
Smiling as Whistler,
Smiling as Kelvin,
And Rodin and Tolstoi,
And Lister and Strauss
(That with his microbes,
This with his fiddles !),
Tugged at His fingers
And worked out His meanings,
Thus hath He slackened
His grasp, and this Thing,
This marvellous Mercédes,
This triumphing contrivance,
Comes to make other
Man's life than she found it :
The Earth for her tyres
As the Sea for his keels ;
Alike in the old lands,
Enseamed with the wheel-ways
Of thousands of dusty
And dim generations,
And in the new countries,
Whose Winds blow unbreathed,
And their Lights are first-hand
From our Father, the Sun.

A SONG OF SPEED

Thus the Mercedes
Comes, O, she comes,
This astonishing device,
This amazing Mercedes,
With Speed—
Speed in the Fear of the Lord.

*So in the Eye of the Lord,
Under the Feet of the Lord,
Out of the measureless
Goodness and grace
In the Hand of the Lord.
Speed !
Speed on the Knees,
Speed in the Laugh,
Speed by the Gift,
Speed in the Trust of the Lord—
Speed !*

APPENDIX

ECHOES

In the time of snows
A thought that glows
And a hope that follows fearless.
In the time of buds
Two beating bloods
And an impulse blind and careless.

In the time of leaves
A heart that heaves
And a heart that dreads the morrow.
In the time of fruit
A wandering foot
And afar a lonely sorrow.

This is the use
Of them that loose
Their sail to the wind of pleasure :
The year outrun,
The dream undone,
And the long, regretful leisure.

1875.

THE pretty washermaiden,
She washes on always !
And as she rubs, and as she wrings,
Her shapely body sways and springs
As if to burst her stays.

APPENDIX

Her cheek is rich and shining
And brown as any egg,
And, when she dives into her tub
To duck the linen she's to scrub,
She shows the neatest leg !

Her round arms white with lather,
Her elbows fresh and red,
Her mouth the rosiest of buds,
Who would not risk a shower of suds
To kiss her dainty head ?

1876.

OF THE FROWARDNESS OF WOMAN

To E. S.

ALL the idols are overthrowing,
Man the end of his reign describes.
Maids are clamouring, wives are crowing,
Widows thrill with a wild surmise.
Those one follows and those one flies,
The loth to be won, and the willing to woo,
Look at the world with longing eyes.
Nothing is left for the men to do.

Pulpit and platform overflowing,
Ready the scheme of things to revise,
See them—eager, militant, knowing—
Write, plead, wrangle, philologise,
Answer papers, and vote supplies,
Wield a racquet, handle a cue,

BRIC-À-BRAC

Paint, fight, legislate, theorise.
Nothing is left for the men to do.

Cora's riding and Lilian's rowing,
Celia's novels are books one buys,
Julia's lecturing, Phyllis is mowing,
Sue is a dealer in oils and dyes,
Flora and Dora poetise,
Jane's a bore and Bee is a blue,
Sylvia lives to anatomise.
Nothing is left for the men to do.

Envoy

Prince, our past on the dust-heap lies !
Saving to scrub, to bake, to brew,
Nurse, dress, prattle, and scandalise,
Nothing is left for the men to do.

OF RAIN

To H. W.

A SOMBRE, sagging sky
Of tossed and tumbled wrack
And ragged clouds, that lie
To meet the wind's attack,
Or march in columns black
And serried ; then a still,
A feverish kind of thrill ;
And whispering in the leaves,
And pattering on the pane,
It falls in very sheaves,
The weary, dreary rain.

APPENDIX

The summer seems to sigh
As she were flouted back.
The grasses rot and die,
The corn begins to crack.
The flowers would like to pack,
It 's all so dank and chill,
Discomfortable and shrill :
While, flickering from the eaves
And gurgling down the drain,
The sodden world receives
The weary, dreary rain.

The big trees, broad and high,
Grow thick and blurred and slack.
The birds, too dull to fly,
Brood dismal, and the track
Shines. If a sudden quack
Sound from the ducks that swill,
The damp hush takes it ill.
But ever and on it weaves
Its rhythms with might and main,
And all its will achieves,
The weary, dreary rain.

Envoy

It lapses not : it cleaves
A way to heart and brain ;
It dins, it duns, it deaves,
It worries and wastes and grieves,
The weary, dreary rain.

BRIC-À-BRAC

OF ANTIQUE DANCES

To A. D.

BEFORE the town had lost its wits,
And scared the bravery from its beaux,
When money-grubs were merely cits,
And verse was crisp and clear as prose,
Ere Chloë and Strephon came to blows
For votes, degrees, and cigarettes,
The world rejoiced to point its toes
In Giges, Gavottes, and Minuets.

The solemn fiddlers touch their kits ;
The tinkling clavichord o'erflows
With contrapuntal quirks and hits ;
And, with all measure and repose,
Through figures grave as royal shows,
With noble airs and pirouettes,
They move, to rhythms Handel knows,
In Giges, Gavottes, and Minuets.

O Fans and Swords, O Sacques and Mits,
That was the better part you chose !
You know not how those gamesome chits,
Waltz, Polka, and Schottische, arose,
Nor how Quadrille—a kind of doze
In time and tune—the dance besets ;
You aired your fashion to the close
In Giges, Gavottes, and Minuets.

Envoy

Muse of the many-twinkling hose,
Terpsichore, O teach your pets

APPENDIX

The charm that shines, the grace that glows
In Gigues, Gavottes, and Minuets.

OF SPRING MUSIC

To W. H. P.

SOUNDS of waking, sounds of growing
Seem the living air to fill.
Hark ! the echoes are yeo-hoing
Valiantly from vale and hill !
Nature's voices, moving still
In a larger, lustier swing,
Work together with a will.
'Tis the symphony of Spring !

Showers are singing, clouds are flowing,
Ocean thunders, croons the rill.
Hark ! the West his clarion 's blowing !
Hark ! the thrush is fluting shrill,
And the blackbird tries his trill,
And the skylark soars to sing !
Even the sparrow tunes his quill.
'Tis the symphony of Spring !

Lambs are bleating, steers are lowing,
Brisk and rhythmic clacks the mill.
Kapellmeister April, glowing
And superb with glee and skill,
Comes, his orchestra to drill
In a music that will ring
Till the gray world yearn and thrill :
'Tis the symphony of Spring !

BRIC-À-BRAC

Envoy

Princes, though your blood be chill,
Here 's shall make you leap and fling.
Fling and leap like Jack and Jill !
'Tis the symphony of Spring.

OF JUNE

To W. W.

LILACS glow, and jasmines climb,
Larks are loud the livelong day.
O the golden summer-prime !
June takes up the sceptre of May,
And the land beneath her sway
Blooms, a dream of blossoming closes,
And the very wind's at play
With Sir Love among the roses.

Lights and shadows in the lime
Meet in exquisite disarray.
Hark ! the rich recurrent rhyme
Of the blackbird's roundelay !
Where he carols frank and gay
Fancy no more glooms nor proses :
Joyously she trips away
With Sir Love among the roses.

O the cool sea's slumbrous chime !
O the links that beach the bay
Paven with meadow-sweet and thyme
Where the brown bees murmur and stray ;

APPENDIX

Lush the hedgerows, ripe the hay,
Many a maiden, binding posies,
Finds herself at Yea-and-Nay
With Sir Love among the roses.

Envoy

Boys and girls, be wise, I pray :
Do as dear Queen June proposes,
For she bids you troop and stay
With Sir Love among the roses.

OF LADIES' NAMES

To A. L.

BROWN is for Lalage, Jones for Lelia,
Robinson's bosom for Beatrice glows,
Smith is a Hamlet before Ophelia.
The glamour stays if the reason goes :
Every lover the years disclose
Is of a beautiful name made free.
One befriends, and all others are foes :
Anna's the name of names for me.

Sentiment hallows the vowels of Delia ;
Sweet simplicity breathes from Rose !
Courtly memories glitter in Celia ;
Rosalind savours of quips and hose,
Araminta of wits and beaux,
Prue of puddings, and Coralie
All of sawdust and spangled shows :
Anna's the name of names for me.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Fie upon Caroline, Jane, Amelia—
These I reckon the essence of prose !—
Mystical Magdalen, cold Cornelia,
Adelaide's attitudes, Mopsa's mowes,
Maud's magnificence, Totty's toes,
Poll and Bet with their twang of the sea,
Nell's impertinence, Pamela's woes !
Anna's the name of names for me.

Envoy

Ruth like a gillyflower smells and blows,
Sylvia prattles of Arcady,
Portia's only a Roman nose,
Anna's the name of names for me.

'Por la calle de Despues se acabe à la casa de Nunca'

In the street of By-and-By
Stands the hostelry of Never.
Dream from deed he must dissever
Who his fortune here would try.

There 's a pathos in the cry,
As of impotent endeavour :
In the street of By-and-By
Stands the hostelry of Never.

Grave or gamesome, low or high,
Dull or dainty, crass or clever,
You must lose your chance for ever,
If you let it forth to fly
In the street of By-and-By.

APPENDIX

'Hic habitat Felicitas'

'FELICITY. Enquire within.
Truly the goddess is at home !'
So read, so thought, the rakes of Rome,
Some frail one's lintel fain to win.

And now it blares thro' bronze and tin,
Thro' clarion, organ, catcall, comb :
'Felicity. Enquire within.
Truly the goddess is at home !'

For, tent or studio, bank or bin,
Platonic porch, Petræan dome,
Where'er our hobbies champ and foam,
Thereo'er the brave old sign we pin :
'Felicity. Enquire within.'

'Allons au bois le may cueillir'—CHARLES D'ORLÉANS.

WE 'LL to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain.
We 'll to the woods, at every vein
To drink the spirit of the day.

The winds of spring are out at play,
The needs of spring in heart and brain.
We 'll to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain.

The world 's too near her end, you say ?
Hark to the blackbird's mad refrain !
It waits for her, the vast Inane ?
Then, girls, to help her on the way
We 'll to the woods and gather may.

BRIC-À-BRAC

FORENOON

SOFT as the whisper shut within a shell,
The far sea rustles white along the sand,
A tiny breeze, blown wanton from the land,
Teases it into dimples visible ;
A dream of blue, the Fife hills sink and swell ;
The large light quivers, and from strand to
strand
A vast content seems breathing to expand ;
And the deep heaven smiles down a sleepy spell.
Dark bathers bob ; the girders of the pier
Stand softened forth against the quiet blue ;
Dogs bark ; the wading children take their
pleasure ;
A horse comes charging round, and I can hear
The gallop's wild waltz-rhythm, falling thro',
Change to the trot's deliberate polka-measure.

RAIN

THE sky sags low with convoluted cloud,
Heavy and imminent, rolled from rim to rim.
A bank of fog blots out of sight the brim
Of the leaden sea, all spiritless and cowed.
The rain is falling sheer and strong and loud,
The strand is desolate, the distance grim
With threats of storm, the wet stones glimmer
dim,
And to the wall the dank umbrellas crowd.

APPENDIX

At home . . . the dank shrubs whisper dismal
mooded,
Black chimney-shadows streak the shiny slates,
The eaves are strung with drops, and steeped the
grasses,
A draggled fishwife screeches at the gates,
The baker hurries dripping on, and hooded
In her wet prints a pretty housemaid passes.

JENNY WREN

MISS WREN is O so wee, so wee !
So light, so light ! So neat, so neat !
Her waist is trig as waist can be.
She has the funniest little feet,
The prettiest hands, the sauciest nose,
The blackest eyes, the reddest lips !
She comes, she looks, she laughs, she goes,
With petulant little turns and dips.
Her little self she perks and plumes.
She chirps and twitters, chirps and cheeps
As though among wet apple-blooms,
With sudden, sidelong, little leaps,
She flits, she flies ! Was never seen
A daintier little cutty-quean.

My love to me is always kind :
She neither storms, nor is she pined ;
She does not plead with tears or sighs,
But gentle words and soft replies—
Good earnest of the thought behind.

BRIC-À-BRAC

They say the little god is blind,
They do not count him quite too wise ;
Yet he, somehow, could bring and bind
My love to me.

And sweetest nut hath sourest rind ?
It may be so ; but she I prize
Is even lovelier in mine eyes
Than good and gracious to my mind.
I bless the fortune that consigned
My love to me.

With strawberries we filled a tray,
And then we drove away, away
Along the links beside the sea,
Where wave and wind were light and free,
And August felt as fresh as May.

And where the springy turf was gay
With thyme and balm and many a spray
Of wild roses, you tempted me
With strawberries.

A shadowy sail, silent and gray,
Stole like a ghost across the bay ;
But none could hear me ask my fee,
And none could know what came to be.
Can sweethearts *all* their thirst allay
With strawberries ?

THE leaves are sere, and on the ground
They rustle with an eerie sound,

APPENDIX

A sound half-whisper and half-sigh—
The plaint of sweet things fain to die,
Sad things for which no ruth is found.

With summer once the land was crowned ;
But now that autumn scatters round
Decay, and summer fancies die,
The leaves are sere.

Once, too, my thought within the bound
Of summer frolicked, like a hound
In meadows jocund with July.
Yet now I sit and wonder why,
With all my waste of penny and pound,
The leaves are sere.

To H. D. C.

If I were king my pipe should be premier.
The skies of time and chance are seldom clear ;
We would inform them all with azure weather.
Delight alone would need to shed a tear,
For dream and deed should war no more together.

Art should aspire, yet ugliness be dear ;
Beauty, the shaft, should speed with wit for
feather ;
And love, sweet love, should never fall to sere
If I were king.

But politics should find no harbour near ;
The Philistine should dread to slip his tether ;
Tobacco should be duty free, and beer ;

BRIC-À-BRAC

In fact, in room of this the age of leather,
An age of gold all radiant should appear
If I were king.

INTER SODALES

OVER a pipe the Angel of Conversation
Loosens with glee the tassels of his purse,
And, in a fine spiritual exaltation,
Hastens, a very spendthrift, to disburse
The coins new minted of imagination.

An amiable, a delicate animation
Informs our thought, and earnest we rehearse
The sweet old farce of mutual admiration
Over a pipe.

Heard in this hour's delicious divagation,
How soft the song ! the epigram how terse !
With what a genius for administration
We rearrange the rambling universe,
And map the course of man's regeneration,
Over a pipe !

1875.

MY MEERSCHAUM PIPE

My Meerschaum Pipe is exquisitely dipped !
Shining, and silver-zoned, and amber-tipped,
In close chromatic passages that number
The tones of brown from cinnamon to umber,
Roll the rich harmonies of shank and crypt.

APPENDIX

Couchant, and of its purple cushions clipped,
Its dusky loveliness I wake from slumber.
Was ever maid than thou more softly lipped,
My Meerschaum Pipe ?

How many pangs herethro' have lightly tripped
Into the past, that wharf of aery lumber ?
How many plans, bright-armed and all equipt,
Out of this glowing brain have skyward
skipped ?
Memories that hallow, O regrets that cumber
My Meerschaum Pipe !

1875.

PIPE OF MY SOUL

PIPE of my soul, our perfumed reverie,
A mild-eyed and mysterious ecstasy,
In purple whorls and delicate spires ascending
Like hope materialised, inquiringly
Towards the unknown Infinite is wending.

The master secret of mortality,
The viewless line this visible life subtending,
Whilom so dim, grows almost plain to me,
Pipe of my Soul !

And as the angels come, the demons flee.
Thine artist influence beautifully blending
The light that is, the dark that may not be,
The great Perhaps above all things impending
Melts large and luminous into thine and thee,
Pipe of my Soul !

1877.

BRIC-À-BRAC

A FLIRTED FAN

A FLIRTED fan of blade and gold
Is wondrous winsome to behold :
 It seems an armoured shard to bear
 The Emperor-Scarab—strange and rare,
Metallic, lustrous, jewel-cold.
Fawning and fluttering fold on fold
And scale on scale, its charm unrolled,
 Lures, dazzles, slays. It thrills the air,
 A flirted fan !

Ah me, that night . . . I cannot scold—
Ich grolle nicht ! My grief untold
 Shall still remain, but I will swear
 Some Spanish grace, dissembled there
Stood by her stall, she so controlled
 A flirted fan.

IN ROTTEN ROW

IN Rotten Row a cigarette
I sat and smoked, with no regret
 For all the tumult that had been.
 The distances were still and green,
And streaked with shadows cool and wet.

Two sweethearts on a bench were set,
Two birds among the boughs were met ;
 So love and song were heard and seen
 In Rotten Row.

APPENDIX

A horse or two there was to fret
The soundless sand ; but work and debt,
 Fair flowers and falling leaves between,
 While clocks are chiming clear and keen,
A man may very well forget
 In Rotten Row.

WITH A FAN FROM RIMMEL'S

Go, happy Fan, in all the land
The happiest . . . seek my lady's hand,
 And, swinging at her winsome waist,
 Forget for aye, so greatly graced,
The House of Odours in the Strand.

Ivory, with lilac silk outspanned,
With ruffling black sedately grand,
 With bloom of eglantine o'ertraced,
 Go, happy Fan.

Her kindly heart will understand,
Her gentle eyes will grow more bland
 At sight of you. Away in haste,
 Dear New Year's gift ! Such perfect taste
As yours her praises *may* command. . . .
 Go, happy Fan !

VILLANELLE

WHERE'S the use of sighing ?
Sorrow as you may,
Time is always flying—

BRIC-À-BRAC

Flying !—and defying
Men to say him nay . . .
Where's the use of sighing ?

Look ! To-day is dying
After yesterday.
Time is always flying.

Flying—and when crying
Cannot make him stay,
Where's the use of sighing ?

Men with by-and-bying,
Fritter life away.
Time is always flying,

Flying !—O, from prying
Cease, and go to play.
Where's the use of sighing,
' Time is always flying ? '

VILLANELLE

A DAINTY thing's the Villanelle
Sly, musical, a jewel in rhyme,
It serves its purpose passing well.

A double-clappered silver bell
That must be made to clink in chime,
A dainty thing's the Villanelle ;

And if you wish to flute a spell,
Or ask a meeting 'neath the lime,
It serves its purpose passing well.

APPENDIX

You must not ask of it the swell
Of organs grandiose and sublime—
A dainty thing's the Villanelle ;

And, filled with sweetness, as a shell
Is filled with sound, and launched in time,
It serves its purpose passing well.

Still fair to see and good to smell
As in the quaintness of its prime,
A dainty thing's the Villanelle,
It serves its purpose passing well.

VILLANELLE

IN the clatter of the train
Is a promise brisk and bright.
I shall see my love again !

I am tired and fagged and fain ;
But I feel a still delight
In the clatter of the train,

Hurry-hurrying on amain
Through the moonshine thin and white—
I shall see my love again !

Many noisy miles remain ;
But a sympathetic sprite
In the clatter of the train

Hammers cheerful :—that the strain
Once concluded and the fight,
I shall see my love again.

BRIC-À-BRAC

Yes, the overword is plain,—
If it's trivial, if it's trite—
In the clatter of the train :
' I shall see my love again.'

VILLON'S STRAIGHT TIP TO ALL CROSS COVES

' Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.'

SUPPOSE you screeve ? or go cheap-jack ?
Or fake the broads ? or fig a nag ?
Or thimble-rig ? or knap a yack ?
Or pitch a snide ? or smash a rag ?
Suppose you duff ? or nose and lag ?
Or get the straight, and land your pot ?
How do you melt the multy swag ?
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

Fiddle, or fence, or mace, or mack ;
Or moskeneer, or flash the drag ;
Dead-lurk a crib, or do a crack ;
Pad with a slang, or chuck a fag ;
Bonnet, or tout, or mump and gag ;
Rattle the tats, or mark the spot ;
You can not bank a single stag ;
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

Suppose you try a different tack,
And on the square you flash your flag ?
At penny-a-lining make your whack,
Or with the mummers mug and gag ?

APPENDIX

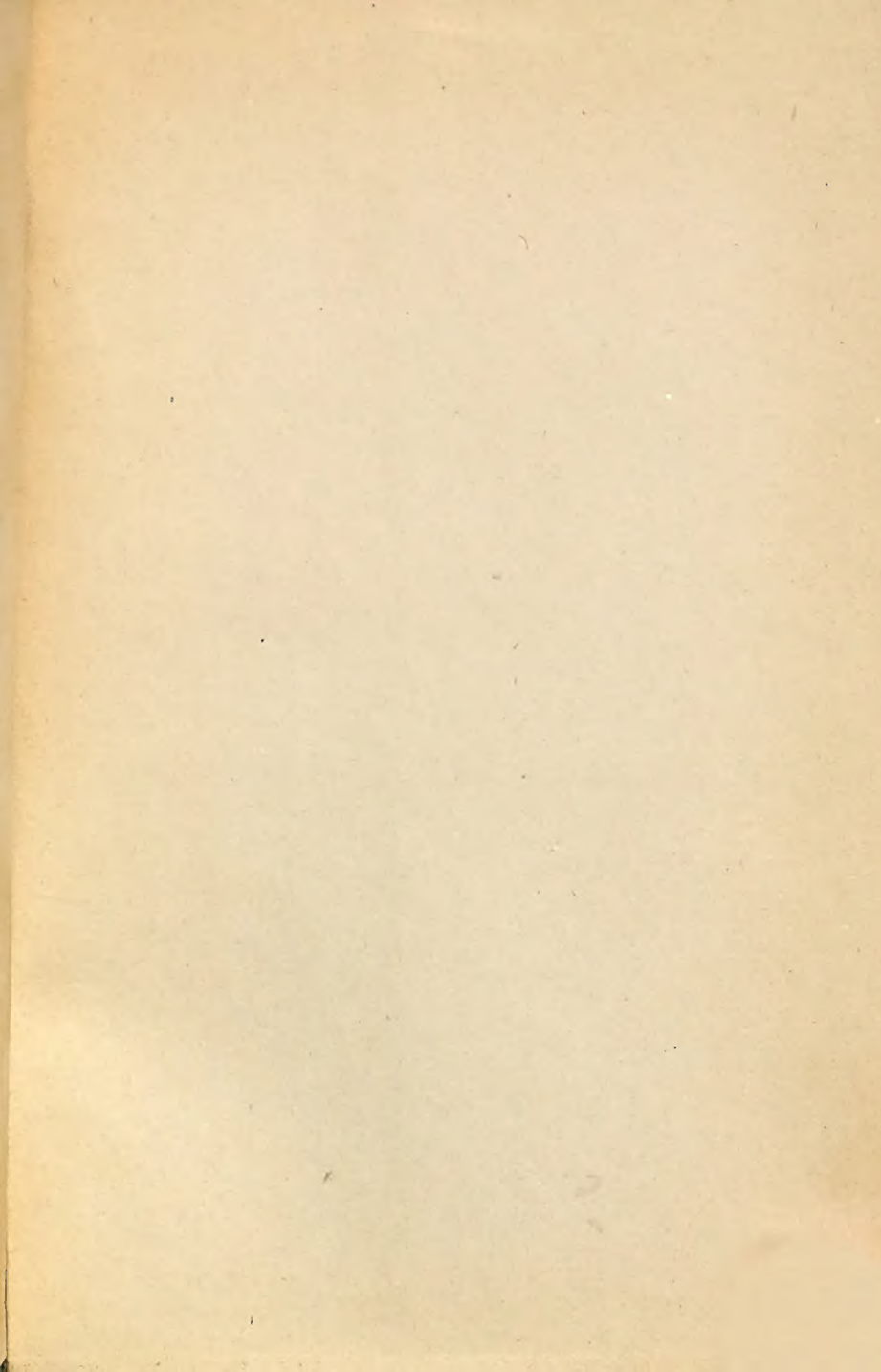
For nix, for nix the dibbs you bag !
At any graft, no matter what,
Your merry goblins soon stravag :
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.

THE MORAL

It 's up the spout and Charley Wag
With wipes and tickers and what not.
Until the squeezer nips your scrag,
Booze and the blowens cop the lot.



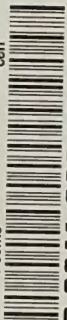
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Poems

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